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WALTER WHITE,

AUTHOR OF "A LONDONER'S WALK TO THE LAND'S END," "A MONTH IN YORKSHIRE," AND OTHER BOOKS OF TRAVEL.

"With unabated bounty the land of England blooms and grows; waving with yellow harvests; thick-studded with workshops, industrial implements, with fifteen millions of workers, understood to be the strongest, the cunningest, and the willingest our Earth ever had."—*Past and Present.*

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ALL ROUND THE WREKIN.

CHAPTER I.

An Interception and a Ramble Initiatory—Gaveston Hill—Guy's Cliff, and its Admirers—Shakespeare's Avon—Old Leamington—Birmingham—Sunshine and Smoke—A Word of Explanation.

INTERCEPTED on the way down by mine ancient friend, I rambled away a July afternoon with him in a country which, while reminding us of former holidays, animated the passing hours by the views it revealed across the richly-wooded landscapes of Warwickshire; the heart, but not the core of England, as an old writer has it. Our recollections of Kenilworth, of the county town with its stately castle, and relics of Sir Guy, and magnificent vase, intermingled with the many things that will be talked about when Urbicola and Ruricola meet, and with hand on shoulder go sauntering over grassy slopes in sunshine and shadow. The summit of Blacklow Hill yielded us a twofold enjoyment, the coolness of thicket and sheltering boughs, and a prospect, spreading out league after league, of yellow fields and thick dark woods—breadths of foliage, burdened with almost tropical luxuriance by the unwonted heat; from which the village spire shoots

up with graceful humility, and the tower of St. Mary's rises proudly, a conspicuous mark for miles around, and the embrasured turrets of Warwick Castle peer from the dark green masses, arresting your eye by the happy combinations which ever attend the grouping of masonry amid fulness of verdure. With such a prospect before us we had but little sympathy for the royal favourite, whose memorial monument stands on the summit, marking the place where the barons "took away his head," and assisting to perpetuate the name of Gaveston Hill.

Willingly did we bend our steps once more to Guy's Cliff, one of the most charming spots in the county. We had seen its gardens and pleasure-grounds, had paced the river-walk beneath the dark-red cliff, and drunk of Sir Guy's Well, and considered his hermitage; we had viewed hall and library, and noteworthy paintings, among which the Cave of Despair, from Spenser's *Faery Queen*, so vividly represents its subject, that some women have been unable to look thereon without a swoon. Yet it is a place which you never weary of; even that sedate antiquary Leland, infuses his quaint style with a touch of poetry when describing Guy's Cliff. "There is sylence," he says, "a praty wood, a cave in living rock, the river rouling over the stones with a praty noise." And Fuller on arriving here breaks out with "a most delicious place, so that a man in many miles riding cannot meet so much variety, as there one furlong doth afford. A steep rock full of caves in the bowels thereof, wash'd at the bottome with a christall river, besides many clear springs on the side thereof, all over-shadowed with a stately grove, so that an ordinary fancy may here find to itself Helicon, Parnassus, and what not? Many Hermites (and Guy

Earl of Warwicke himself) being sequestered from the world, retreated hither. Some will say it is too gaudy a place for that purpose, as having more of a paradise than wilderness therein, so that men's thoughts would rather be scattered than collected with such various objects. But seeing Hermits deny themselves the company of men, let them be allowed to converse with the rarities of Nature, and such are the fittest texts for a solitary devotion to comment upon."

The "river rouling over the stones" is the Avon—Shakespeare's Avon—which having watered the finely-undulating park of Stoneleigh, and its noble oaks, here awakens the busy clack of the most picturesque of mills, and tumbling over the bay in a broad cascade flows onward between the cliff and meadow, reflecting the lavish foliage, the overhanging trees, the ivy and luxuriant creepers which climb high up on the rock and peep in at the windows. Viewed from across the river the house presents a charming picture, and we sauntered there in the twilight, discovering manifold effects of light and shadow, and more and more of harmony between mill and house and the sylvan environment.

Truly the sojourners at Leamington have pleasant places all around them, offering an agreeable escape from the pretentiousness of an increasing fashionable watering-place, and beguilement for their languid hours. Nature and antiquity are a good antidote to the deadening effects of conventional life. There is a relic of antiquity in the town itself, close by the church, a fragment of old Leamington, which perhaps because it is accessible, attracts but little attention, and yet is an ancient house of post and panel with thatched roof that looks as if its retrospection might

almost equal that of the humble yet precious tenement at Stratford-on-Avon;

Birmingham is not a lovely place, and it seemed more ill-favoured than usual as I entered it by a late train from my woodland ramble. The prospect of head-quarters there for half my holiday was only rendered inviting by the hope of looking on old familiar faces, and the promise of a home beyond the smoky margin, where the garden glistens with dewdrops in the morning, and the thrush and nightingale may be heard at eventide; and you look upon meadows, fields, and hedge-rows, which stretch away all fresh and green to the Lickey, and that looks into the vale of Severn.

Be not disheartened, good-natured reader, here at the outset, for I myself am too fond of sunshine to sacrifice it willingly for smoke. Judging from appearances, we shall have enough of sunshine, and of a high temperature too, before our month is over. And Birmingham, though uninviting in its outward aspect, is full of attractions within; a place of rare invention, ingenuity, and industry, exercising them in a thousand ways alike wonderful and admirable. With some of these ways we may occupy ourselves when the time comes, and find a charm in noisy workshops as well as in shady lanes or on breezy hill-tops, and with the additional claim on our sympathy arising out of the human interests and social phenomena therewith associated.

My choice of a Shropshire proverb for title needs perhaps a word of explanation. It is chosen not because our wanderings will be confined to the county of Salop; but as happily descriptive of the facts of the book in few words. And although our tour round old

Mons Gilbertus takes a wide range, entering Leicestershire in one direction, and Herefordshire in the other, we shall touch upon hills which either command a view of the memorable Mount, or of some of the kindred—Clee, Corndon, or Caradoc, who every day look forth on its venerable brow. I trust that Shropshire will find nothing blameworthy in my application of the generous toast which she has drunk for a thousand years with honest patriotism and hearty goodwill.

Though in anticipation, I take the opportunity to mention here that if my narrative fails in some particulars, my inability to deliver most of my letters of introduction through the absence or removal of the respondents, is the occasion of the failure. One gentleman, to whom I bore distinguished credentials, and with whom I hoped to converse on the moral and social condition of a large parish, admitted me no farther than his doorstep: not a place on which to prolong a visit.

CHAPTER II.

To the Black Country—Terrific Phenomena—Omnipotence of Coal and Iron—Wolverhampton—Rural Scenes—Retired Chemists—Oaken—Wrottesley Hall—An Ancient Family—Toad's-Nest Lane—Entertainment—A Trip with the Astronomer and Crimea—Chillington—A Scrap of Genealogy—The Yacht-builders—Boscobel—Reminiscences of the Royal Fugitive—A Peep at the Wrekin—A Trot to Tong—A Rare Old Church—The Golden Chapel—Shakespearian Epitaph—Sculptures in Alabaster—Tong Castle—A Freak of Architecture—A Runaway—Newport—Pathetic Appeal.

In glad expectation of coming pleasures, of rural scenes and sounds, with all their enlivening influences, the morning found me journeying farther to the north-west. As if to enhance the pleasure of departure from Birmingham, the start is through a tunnel whichever be your route, so that the smoky daylight of the smokiest end of Staffordshire upon which we emerge, appears cheerful by contrast. Once across the Edgbaston viaduct, which bestrides the ancient Icknield Street, and we are hurried into the Black Country.

The name is eminently descriptive, for blackness everywhere prevails; the ground is black, the atmosphere is black, and the underground is honey-combed by mining galleries stretching in utter blackness for many a league. The scene is marvellous, and to one who beholds it for the first time by night, terrific. Then the roaring-furnaces are seen for miles around pouring forth their fierce throbbing flames like

volcanoes; then the hundred chimneys of iron-works display their blazing crests, or sheafs of fiery tongues; then the dull gleam of heaps of roasting ironstone makes you fancy that the old globe itself is here smouldering away; overhead dense clouds of smoke reflect a lurid light, rolling fitfully before the wind; while the hissing and rushing of steam, the clang and clatter of machinery, the roaring blasts, and the shock of ponderous hammer-strokes, all intensified by the presence of night, complete an effect which amazes alike the eye and the ear. The effect is one that vividly excites the imagination, and is not easily forgotten.

By day, as the train speeds across, you hear the same noises, and see the fires divested of their nightly terrors, yet find it difficult to believe that a scene of so much havoc and seeming confusion represents prosperous industry, and one of the most important departments of British trade. Perhaps for the first time you become aware of the omnipotence of coal and iron; even the stations, walls, and bridges, are built of bricks that have the appearance of iron. You catch glimpses of smoking heaps, of muddy canals, complications of locks, bridges, tramways; boats moving, trains rolling; of coal-pits where the iron arm projects from the little engine-house working busily up and down, while the whimseys creak as the long rope passes over; of abandoned workings where office and engine-house are in ruin, and scraps of ragged hedgerow look very miserable, and the tall posts stand up skeleton-like, and fragments of machinery lie about devoured by rust; of heaps, nay hills, that resemble brick rubbish, of gigantic cyster-shells which a lady's hoop would hardly encircle, and big slaty-looking slabs

—accumulations of refuse which cumber the ground. And amid all this are the cottages of artisans and miners: English homes, whence sun and stars are seen darkly, situate in a region devoid of repose and beauty, which looks as if smitten by desolation, notwithstanding that here and there grow patches of wheat and plots of potatoes. And so it continues for thirteen miles, all the way from Birmingham to Wolverhampton; but whatever may be the gloom, havoc, and confusion elsewhere, you only see the worst when passing Bilston.

Many a walk have I taken through the dismal district, and shall take more ere the month be over, with you in company, estimable reader; that is, if you can by any possibility imagine it to be holiday-time in such a place. Meanwhile, with a quick turn to the left at Wolverhampton the train runs in a few minutes from smoke and noise into the fields and pastures of a pleasantly undulating district, which shows us what a pretty country the scorched region must have been before it began to be black. The sandstone rock which underlies so large an area of the western counties, shows itself dark-red in the cuttings, adorned by tall foxgloves. In the brief pause at Albrighton we inhale the freshness of dewy fields, and fragrance of hedgerows—that delightful incense with which Earth saluted Morn long before the occupation by those knights of Alberic's-tun who were bound to furnish "carbones" to Bridgenorth castle whenever the king, following up his vocation of subjugating the Welsh, should please to lodge at that haughty fortress. And so with more and more of rural prospect we come to the little station of Codsall.

What a pleasure it was with knapsack on shoulder

to step away under the rustling leaves, to hear the hum of insects, the voices of haymakers, to scent the odorous air, and watch the flickering shadows. Undulations still diversify the landscape, and here and there, where the view broadens, you see a very modern red house set off by young shrubberies, concerning which the answer to your inquiry will be, that it belongs to the owner of chemical works, or a retired chemist of Wolverhampton: an indication, perhaps, that wholesale chemistry is profitable. Then between banks of fern, fox-glove, and harebell, and hedge-rows of honeysuckle and wild roses, along a pretty lane, to the little rustic village of Oaken, where the cottages appear half-smothered by apple trees, and the gardens are crowded with peas, cabbages, and flowers. It looks happy and innocent, but those who know the place describe the familiar talk of the cottagers as anything but Arcadian. The lane winding onwards into the real rural country, brought me in about an hour from the station to the borders of a park where, on a rising ground within, stand an observatory and tall signal-pole; and directing my steps towards a lofty mass of foliage, I came presently to Wrottesley Hall, one of those old-fashioned mansions whose aspect betokens centuries of peace and comfort. England has many such places, which seem emblematic of herself; surviving fresh and fair after immemorial years. Here, the remains of ancient earthworks indicate the abode of aboriginal Britons, before Domesday Book was written; their successors trace ancestry and possession back to the days of Henry II., and in a walk over the estate will show you a park which was a special gift from Edward III., by a deed dated at Calais. If you venerate Charles II., the lane now

known as Toad's-Nest, will seem memorable to you, for he is said to have ridden along it when flying from Worcester. But the same is said of many lanes hereabouts.

The family not having yet returned from London, Lord Wrottesley had favoured me by notifying his astronomer of my visit, and I had every reason to be satisfied with the result. The amiable gentleman led me forthwith up to the library, where we initiated our acquaintance while dipping into rare old books: literary treasures for which a reader willingly gives up an hour of sunshine. With access to such a library, and the daily course of eloquent music played by his lordship on the large and handsome organ that stands at one end of the entrance hall, I thought that visitors to Wrottesley could never suffer from weariness. For outdoor recreation there are the delightful variety produced by bosky walks and flowery slopes, the blossom and fruitage which attend long years of patient culture, the green coolness of groves, and the busy murmur among the leaves of a magnificent group of limes. And looking southwards, the view is seen stretching away for miles across a quiet landscape.

We walked to the observatory, and saw the instruments which, as may be seen in the *Transactions* of the Royal and of the Astronomical Society, have rendered good service to stellar science. The tall pole was erected for the imparting of a time-signal to the neighbourhood by the descent of a ball, which takes place twice a week at three in the afternoon.

Then, after an early dinner, and a draught of the Wrottesley ale, which was so good that the butler could not tempt me from it with sherry, we started for a drive in one of the light four-wheeled wagons recently

introduced into this part of Staffordshire: well-suited to country roads. The astronomer took the reins, and Crimea, the pony, so named from having survived the terrible campaign in Tauris, rattled away at a pace that seemed as if inspired by love of a holiday, and sped us in short time through the lanes to Chillington.

Here again we meet with one of the old country names in that of Squire Giffard, owner of the estate, and historic withal, for he is twenty-sixth in descent from that Osborne de Bolebec whose son Walter helped the Conqueror bravely with ships, men, and money, and won for himself the name of Gyffarde, or the Liberal, and had as recompense one hundred and seven lordships in the conquered realm. One of his successors fought under Strongbow in Ireland, and acquired Chillington by marriage on his return. Joan Giffard is mentioned in a bishop's letter as one of the sisterhood at White Ladies, a religious house founded in the neighbouring forest in the days of Lion-hearted Richard. In 1575, John Giffard, high-sheriff, had the honour of entertaining Queen Elizabeth for two days after her visit to Stafford. When, in the night following the battle of Worcester, Charles II. and his party lost their way on Kinver Heath, Peter Giffard, one of the number, undertook the guidance, and brought the monarch safely to Boscobel, and devised measures for his subsequent escape.

The present Squire, whom we met taking the exercise suited to age and infirmity, in his wagon, is better known for his animating liberality than his ancestors for their valour and loyalty, for the public are admitted freely to the park, as the frequent announcement on the walls in Birmingham of an EXCURSION TO CHILLINGTON agreeably demonstrates. To holiday folk

from the Black Country, the place must seem a paradise, where broad acres of lawn and pasture, abundance of wood and water, and walks bedecked with flowering shrubs, offer them many a beautiful scene. The water is a large lake, one hundred acres in extent, curving in places into deep bays, round which the trees form a pretty leafy sweep. We took a boat from the fleet maintained for the use of visitors, and rowed across the lake and up the canal which, bordered by rhododendrons, pursues a winding course to a point within sight of the house: an edifice that shows how little the builder understood the way to harmonise his bricks and mortar with the beauty of surrounding scenery.

We walked round to a workshop in the rear, to look at what in such a place was a curiosity—a yacht built by a village carpenter, and a wooden-legged survivor of the Crimean Naval Brigade, and with no little credit to their skill and ingenuity. Blue-Jacket took pride in pointing out the fine lines and clean run of the little vessel, as she stood on the floor ready to be hauled down and launched in the lake; and we inferred that whenever his darling fairly took to the water, he would be the proudest man in Staffordshire. It was he who raised and rigged the signal-pole at Wrottesley.

From Chillington the pony trotted always with the same celerity to Boscobel, that ancient unpretending manor-house, which from having been the refuge of a not very estimable monarch, emerges thenceforth from obscurity, and attracts visitors from afar. It stands just within the edge of Shropshire, the county of our coming ramble, in an out-of-the-way place, which still retains somewhat of the characteristic apparent in what is said to have been the original name, *Bosco bello*.

Here once grew Brewood forest, overspreading the borders of two counties, and within its sylvan precinct were built the Cistercian house of White Ladies, the Benedictine house of Black Ladies (in Staffordshire), and the quiet old residence, Boscobel.

Modern repairs now mask the former picturesque features of a timbered house, by the respectable tameness of paint and plaster; but you can still see, behind the screen of ivy, the chimney-stair which led to the fireplace of the bedroom above, and the panelled dining-room, where the fugitive king may have eaten a dinner, where his portrait hangs above the black marble chimney-piece; and in the garret, the little den under the oaken floor, said to have been his hiding-place. The civil dame who shows the house, told us that she went into the den once a week to dust it out, and we took turns in sqeezing ourselves into it, and came to the conclusion that if Charles Stuart had ever passed a night therein, with the lid closed, and a stack of cheese above, as tradition tells, a certain merry monarch would never have figured in English history. You might as well hope to survive a night in a kilderkin. If you can honour a king who is not of the blood-royal, a portrait of stout old Oliver hanging in a little parlour, will be a suggestive study. Or you may pace the well-ordered garden where the box hedge looks old enough for Peter Giffard to have seen it, or set foot on the stone that once formed part of a king's dining-table; and read the white-pebbled legend that records the "quinque fratrum de Stirpe Penderel," in 1651; or stroll away to the descendant of the Royal Oak which grows, protected by a railing, in the adjacent field, and get thence a peep at the Wrekin. The whole place is so clean and well-kept that your

gratuity to the dame will be a cheerful one; and she, at this signal of departure, will request your autograph for the *Visitors' Book*, and perhaps tell you that many a picnic party visits Boscobel in the fine weather. Though communicative, she will not tell you that the Pendrells would have been just as loyal to Cromwell, at the bidding of their chief Peter Giffard.

The sun was now dropping in the west, but summer evenings are long, and I suggested a trip to see with our own eyes whether, as antiquaries describe, the church of St. Bartholomew at Tong is one of the most remarkable in all Shropshire. Crimea was ready, and the astronomer willing, and we rattled through the lanes and along the turnpike-road to our destination. At first sight the church reminds you of the churches seen in many a German landscape, or of those singular specimens of ecclesiastical architecture pictured by travellers in Norway: a low octagonal tower springing from a square base, and bearing a short spire. With numerous pinnacles along the embattled parapet of the roof, at the base and summit of the octagon, and the lights of the spire terminating in finials, and the timeworn appearance of the masonry, the effect is singularly picturesque and pleasing: one that would well repay a longer excursion than ours. We walked round and round the venerable fabric, finding each time something fresh to admire in the handiwork of those who rebuilt the church at the beginning of the fifteenth century.

Directed by a rustic lassie to the clerk's house "on top o' yander," we got the key, and treated ourselves to a sight of the interior, which though plain in comparison with the outside, contains so much worth lingering over as to make us wish for an arrest of twilight. However, we examined as best we could,

the Golden Chapel, an exquisite little appendage to the south aisle, which shows what adepts the masons of the sixteenth century were in the art of fan-vaulting. The ceiling indeed is wonderfully beautiful, with its numerous ribs springing from and terminating in pendents, and still retaining traces of the gilding from which the chapel derives its name. You will sit down instinctively, and note the beauty and excellence of the workmanship, and perhaps regret that such a place should now be used as a pew. At the western end, on a canopied bracket, is the bust of Arthur Vernon, a priest, whose marble features resemble those of the knight Sir Henry Vernon, who lies beside his wife on the handsome tomb standing under the arch by which the chapel opens to the aisle.

Besides this tomb there are four others presenting details of the Perpendicular style, which you would gladly pore over for hours as a book wherein may be read many particulars of the olden time, especially of costume. One of these, known as the Stanley tomb, bears a rhyming epitaph which, as some good antiquaries show, was written by Shakespeare in his youthful days. It is on Sir Thomas Stanley, who died in 1576, and is thus expressed :—

> Not Monumental Stone preserves our fame,
> Nor sky-aspiring Pyramids our name.
> The Memory of him for whom this stands
> Shall outlive marble and Defacers' hands :
> When all to Time's consumption shall be given,
> Stanley, for whom this stands, shall stand in Heaven.

The eastern end of the same tomb has also a rhyming epitaph, but very poor in comparison with this.

While contemplating the sculptured effigies of those knights and barons of old, now lying here side by side with their wives, the marble or alabaster representing

with elaborate art the armour or costume they wore when living, our impression of the power and dignity of a feudal baron as derived from books, becomes heightened by the sight of the pains taken to perpetuate their name and fame. Not even kings and queens can hope for such sepulchral carvings now-a-days. One would like to know something of the sculptors by whom they were fashioned.

The altar is of alabaster; the windows yet retain a few relics of the old gorgeous-tinted glass; the chancel stalls, some of the pews, the beams and the screen, exhibit specimens of carving in wood that will engage your attention as well as the curious stone-work; and while creeping from one interesting object to another, your feeling will be of mingled surprise and admiration at a singularly beautiful church. Mount the narrow stair to the tower, and you will see that it is equally well-cared for in matters sonorous, having a peal of bells, and a Great Tom six feet in diameter.

The church stands on the left of the road as you go from Shiffnal to Newport. Many a traveller passes through the obscure village, little imagining the value of its ecclesiastical treasure; which is, however, mutely eloquent of former distinction. For Tong once formed part of the estates of the great Earl of Shrewsbury, who first built a church on this site. Among its subsequent possessors, we read of Richard de Belmeis, that busy and mighty Warden of the Marches, who had no scruples about bribing the troublesome chieftains of Wales to murder one another. The exceeding beauty of the present church is accounted for by its having been made collegiate; and, looking from the corner of the churchyard, you can see in the adjoining meadow a fragment of the college wall, now

overgrown with weeds and brambles. Tong Mere, where the inmates of the college caught fish for their holy days, still remains, rippling before the breeze as of yore. And beyond is seen Tong Castle, formerly the seat of the Durants, lately purchased by the Earl of Bradford, a strange-looking building, the style of which is an unsuccessful combination of Moorish and Gothic. That there was something strange about one of the owners, appears manifest by his having had *École élémentaire* written over the door of the village school.

It was dusk when we left the church. The astronomer wished to carry me back to pass the night at Wrottesley; but as that lay to the south, and I wished to go north, I had to resist his solicitations. Then, to give effect to his good-nature in another way, he pronounced against my walking the seven miles to Newport, and would drive me at least part of the way. Crimea, refreshed by a feed, was livelier than ever, and disappointed in former attempts at running away, now accomplished his purpose, and scampered along the road at a pace which would have astonished his former foes the Cossacks not a little. When at length he listened to reason and drew up, the distance to Newport was but "a mile an' a hawf," as a passing rustic pronounced it: whereupon I alighted, and shook hands with the astronomer, who turning round, was quickly out of sight on his long homeward journey.

After dark there is but little opportunity for criticism of house-fronts, so on coming to the town I turned into the first inn on the way, which proved to be *The Shakespeare*, and very willing to supply my wants. It was Saturday night, and while eating my supper, I heard the singing of the large party of working-people

in the tap-room, who were making a hole in their wages as a happy finish to the week. The liveliest singer sang something pathetic, and one stanza so very touching, that I made a note of it:

"Come all you ladies drest in white,
Come all you sailors drest in black,
From the cabbing boy to the mainmast high,
Pray shed a tear for my sailor b'y."

CHAPTER III.

Preliminaries—Tom Brown's Birthplace—Edgemond—"What's ta dew?"—A proper Inn—Home-made and Home-fed—Beauty amid Tameness—Charm in Things Trivial—Timbered Houses—Happy Aspects—Tibberton—Frangas, non Flectes—Butcher's Chips for Happiness—Lanes and Footpaths—Foliage and Shadows—Mason—The Mees—Great Bolas—The Tern—A Lucky Star—The Singer—Parley with a Preacher—Reasons for declining an Invitation—Cold Hatton—Ellerdine Heath—Stanton—Bury Walls—Hawkstone.

WANDERINGS in Shropshire had acquainted me with no small portion of its scenery; but I had not yet seen the northern end or western side of the county, which was one of the reasons for my seeking Newport as a starting-point. This northern end, a prolongation of the great Vale Royal of Cheshire, is comparatively tame in character; so to avoid the wearisome tameness of highroads in such a country, I shaped a course direct for Wem, which, on the map, promised a continuation of field-paths and lanes, leaving Lilleshull Abbey for a future opportunity. It is remarkable how a walk may be improved by departure from the turnpikes.

Newport divides with Shiffnal the honour of having given birth to Tom Brown of facetious memory, whose finding of a fifty pound note under his plate at the Earl of Dorset's dinner, is still told in the most familiar of literary anecdotes. The appearance of the old red

sandstone church-tower, masonry of the fifteenth century, will not increase your respect for the builder of the two patchworky red brick side aisles. A sprinkling of Welsh names may be read over the doors, and here and there a timbered house presents us with aspects which heighten the interest of travel in Shropshire.

I started early, and turning into a lane at the end of the town, walked to Edgemond, a village that looks contented, with prosperous gardens, orchards, and ricketty pigstyes. I stopped to breakfast at the *Old Lamb*, where the hostess bade her daughter to "look alive an' get some sticks tew put under kittle;" and the girl, seeing no occasion for haste, replied, "What's ta dew?" The house is a good specimen of a Shropshire village inn, overburdened, as one might guess, from the sight of well-filled bacon-racks, with appliances of comfort. No lack of pots, pans, and crockery, and all so clean, and such an ample fireplace; and opposite, a massive oak table, black with age, and shining from the rubbing of many generations, looks as if it had belonged to some baronial hall. Being too long when brought to the *Lamb*, it was sawn in two, and the other half stands in an adjoining room. The hostess chats while preparing my repast: "We make 'ur own bread, butter, and cheese," she says, "'ur own malt, brews 'ur own beer, and kills 'ur own bacon and mutton." She thought that Edgemond was as comfortable a village as any in Shropshire, the people were mostly well off, the church had been beautified, the preaching good: "But you see, sir, 'tis awnly respectable people as goes to church; the lower classes goes to chapel." A villager who came in bore similar testimony: farm-labourers could earn eleven or twelve

shillings a week; and rent a cottage having two rooms upstairs, with a garden and well, for three pounds ten a year: And as for work, it was a man's own fault in these times "if he hadn't al'ays something ta dew."

The country appeared more and more rural as I pursued my north-westerly route: the sound of distant chimes came floating on the breeze, and the very air seemed glad with the music of larks, notwithstanding that the sun was hid by a dull grey sky. The view, made up of broad rolling fields, and a glimpse of blue uplands in the distance between the trees, feasts the eye with verdure and good cultivation; and though not at all romantic, holds a charm in its pretty lanes and inviting footpaths, and soothing quietness. How much the enjoyment of such a walk depends on things that seem trivial if described; an old wall patched with white clover; an abandoned stonequarry where the red and gray surface of the rock is well-nigh hidden by a fringe of elders in full bloom, and by a dense tangle of brambles, wild roses, mallows, and nettles; a horse looking over a gate into the lane, as if he felt too lonely on his day of rest; the block and stool of the stone-breaker, placed close to the bank, suggestive of quiet and repose for the weary; or it may be a rude thatched gable peeping above a hedge; how, in all these and things innumerable, a succession of pictures is presented to the eye, is best known to him who with willing foot has sought them out!

Then there were the timbered houses, relics of the olden time, that seem impregnate with domestic histories of the days of the Shropshire worthies—Baxter, Wycherly, and stout old Benbow; or, peradventure, with reminiscences of the Civil Wars. If outward signs may be trusted, that one with pretty spires to

the dormer windows, and with such a wealth of roses, sweetbriar, and hollyhocks in the front garden, such magnificent lilies and peonies, is the happiest of all. Another, partly overhung with ivy, has chequered panels, black and white being the prevailing style. If Shropshire folk would only be persuaded that a paint of red ochre would look much better than black, and appear in harmony with the surrounding conditions—which cannot be said of black—they would never more paint their timbers sable.

Not a mile of the way but shows signs of prosperity, and fertility is manifest by the timber as well as the crops. Here and there noble ash trees and spreading sycamores border the road or screen the houses. And so we pace from hamlet to village, pausing in the little churchyard of Tibberton, which terminates on a cliff, to read the epitaphs on a "Curious Boy" and "Hanguish'd" woman; and becoming aware that we are on the territory of a Duke, by sight of the *Sutherland Arms*, with the motto *Frangas, non Flectes*, on a flowery-fronted inn, which looks across the narrow way to a teeming orchard. A man sitting on a gate, whom I complimented on his happy looks and proof that work agreed with him, answered laughing, "'Tis some'at besides work: I eats a few butcher's chips every week: them's the things for looking happy on." Then more sycamores, and large oaks, and clumps of walnuts, and more gray gables and thatched roofs; then a lane, along which runs a green stripe between the wheel-tracks, where the hedges, furlong after furlong, are a maze of ferns, roses, and honeysuckle, where the oak branches meet over head and ivy enwraps the stems; where, from time to time, a half-concealed pool almost startles you by its sunken

shadows, and there seems something mysterious in the bird that darts suddenly from the covert and flits silently across the sleeping water.

The little village of Mason tells the same story of prosperity by the mouth of a cottager, who, while presenting me with one of her best roses, said, "Most of us here hold 'ur own properties." There were no labourers in distress, yet none of them would object to a few more of weekly shillings. A little farther, and the lane ends at a bridge over the Mees, close by a white mill, against which the notchy dark-brown wheel appears unusually distinct; and presently we come to Great Bolas, once the seat of the Knights Foresters of Shropshire, successors of Ulger venator; but now unable to supply dinner to a wayfarer, for it has no public-house.

Thence a lonesome track leads to a foot-bridge over the Tern, a little river that flows from Aqualate Mere to the Severn, enlivening a pastoral valley on its way; and onwards to the turnpike-road from Wellington to Hodnet, and within sight of *The Star*, where arriving just in time for the family dinner, I found lamb and peas, currant pudding, and good home-brewed, very acceptable after the morning's walk.

When two hours later I returned to my cross-country route, the sun had partially scorched up the dull gray cloud-screen, and shone with that unusual fierceness which characterised the first half of July. Happily the breeze woke up and made a noise among the leaves, and a margin of grass, pleasant to the feet, stretched along the path. Approaching a sharp bend in the road, I heard a voice beyond the hedge singing a hymn with cheerful note, and knowing the tune, I lifted up my voice and chimed in with a bass. At the

bend there met me a young man who, holding an open hymn-book in his hand, evidently enjoyed his exercise. "Are you going straight away to heaven?" I asked, with a smile, as we both stood still.

"Yes," he answered; "will you go with me?"

"What would you say if I should wish to go to Wem first?"

"I'd say you'd better go with me?"

"Why—are you a local preacher?"

"Well—I am a local preacher; and if you go with me you shall hear something that's most worth thinking about."

"And what's that?"

"Going to heaven."

"And is it that which a man ought most to think about?"

He looked at me in utter amazement, and replied, "How would you like to be put into one of them great blazing furnaces where they melt iron?"

"I shouldn't like it at all."

"Well then!"

"Well then!" and we stood looking one at the other.

He returned to the charge with "You had better come and hear me preach."

"Where?—In one of those little places which you country-folk describe as nice and close?"

"Well, it will be pretty warm to day."

"That is one reason why I can't accept your invitation: another is, that I can't put trust in sermons preached in a foul atmosphere. Moreover, it seems to me that many people distress themselves about going to heaven, who take but little heed to their way of life on earth. I will go and hear you when you recognise

the necessity for fresh air and plenty of it; when you discern rightly the dependence between here and hereafter; when the wife who hears you shall understand that thrift and cleanliness in house and family are a part of Christian duty; when the village grocer shall do unto his customers that which he would they should do unto him; when the labourer digging a ditch in a far-away field all by himself, shall work as diligently, and finish-off as carefully, as if his master were standing by. If I mistake not, these would be acceptable as first steps on the journey to which you invite me."

I held out my hand: he took it, but with a doubtful shake of his head; and so we parted.

The way led me on through Cold Hatton, across Ellerdine Heath, across large fields of blossoming peas, and barley already yellow: through Stanton, and a wild waste of gorse and bracken towards the rough, wooded hills which had now and then been visible from the highest parts of the road. Here the route became intricate, winding through a 'coppy,' as the natives call it, then ramifying through the dark fir-woods, and steeply up the red sandstone hill-side in a deep gully; cool, but toilsome. Thence, emerging from the trees, it passes Bury Walls—an ancient Roman encampment—and so to the village of Weston, where I came at dusk to the *Hawkstone Hotel*, which stands overshadowed by trees on the edge of a noble park.

CHAPTER IV.

Hawkstone Park—A Dewy Exploration—The Lodge by the Lake—Hollering for Old Jones—The Dark Passage—The Fairy Grotto—The Terrace—The Column—Clive's Birth-place—Blore Heath—Woods and Cliffs—Zoological Experiments—The Red Sandstone—A Visit to the Hermit—The Ruin of Red Castle—The Jackdaws—How to make a Guide comfortable—Old Jones and Young Jones—The Visitors' Book—Ode to Young Men—Wem—The Execrable Baron—Happy Tradesmen—The Two Dumdrudges—Good Beer—Honest Brewers—Rustic Speech—A Model Publichouse—How to share Puddings—Welsh Hampton—Meres—Ellesmere—The Bowling Green.

HAWKSTONE PARK—the seat of Lord Hill—occupies a romantic hilly region which Nature has heaved up from the tame level of North Shropshire, as Malvern from the plain of Worcester, and is, like its prouder rival, the more attractive by the contrast. Hawkstone is famous in all the country round, even as far as Manchester, and many a visitor, many a happy pic-nic party, does it entertain during the sunshiny weather. But they may not wander as they list without a guide, or feast on other viands than those supplied from the hotel. The landlord being appointed to give out tickets is thereby assured of guests.

Long before the dew was dry on the morrow, I took my ticket and strode away across the grass in a direction which he said would bring me to a lodge, where 'Old Jones' the guide would be heard of. I found

the lodge in a hollow on the border of a lake, surrounded by tall trees, and wandered about for awhile, spying out the weather-stained statue of Neptune, and sundry natural or artificial curiosities, not one of which gave me any intimation of a guide, until an old woman opening the shutters looked out, and said she would be at my service as soon as she had put her things on. Presently she came forth and led me across the grassy undulations to a spot near the middle of the park, and there left me with thanks for her fee, and instructions to go on towards an archway and "holler."

I woke up the echoes, and at length heard a reply from Old Jones, who came trudging up the slope: a hale, cheerful-looking man, with a roguish twinkle at times in his eye, as he talks about the sayings and doings of visitors. We at once mounted the crag, and entered one of the wonders of the place, a deep narrow fissure in the rock, a natural approach to the passage hewn through the crown of the arch that bestrides the road beneath. This passage is long and totally dark, and Old Jones bids you notice that although you seem to be descending the floor is really on a level, and adds with a chuckle, "there's always plenty of screaming here among the young women when a large party is going through." At length you pass into a gloomy cavern which receives light here and there through glass of different colours, and presents strange effects of light and shade, and from this you enter a fairy grotto where pearly shells and crystalline rock glisten in all the colours of the rainbow. It seemed to me far less interesting than the narrow cleft riven by Nature, through which we had approached.

Then we paced up the natural green terrace—the pride of Hawkstone—which rises gradually, bordered

by woods, to an upper level, where stands the column, 112 feet in height, built by Sir Richard Hill, in commemoration of the first Protestant Lord Mayor of London. I mounted to the top, while Old Jones sat down on the lowest step to comfort himself with a pipe. In clear weather you can look into thirteen counties from the lofty balcony, and see the Malverns, and the hills of the Cymry, and many a summit besides; and while gazing towards Market Drayton you will remember the birth-place of Clive, the hero of India, who, ere long, is to have a statue in the public place of Shrewsbury; and eastwards Blore Heath—now cultivated fields—recalls one of the battles of the Roses. Of all this I saw but little because of a haze; but there was a pleasing view of dense woods bordering the park, and, immediately beneath, of hill and dale, smooth green slopes and levels, masses of foliage, and precipitous cliffs. These cliffs are the characteristic feature of Hawkstone, heaved up for the most part in parallel lines, with grassy hollows between, to a height of from eighty to one hundred feet. On one hangs the ruin of Red Castle, a picturesque object, where Rowland Hill the Royalist found it convenient to hide, for his own safety and the good of the Commonwealth.

To the zoologist Hawkstone offers an additional interest; for if foreign birds or animals are to be reared and acclimatised, Lord Hill is always ready to undertake the experiments within his sheltered grounds. Here rare pheasants from India, and the last discovered species of antelope, have been habituated to our English climate.

From the column we walked to the brow of the western cliff, a romantic spot which has been made accessible by the excavation of paths and steps, and

there we sat down to enjoy the prospect. Under our feet reposed the rugged ridge, the New Red Sandstone of geologists, wherein they find fossil footmarks, and evidences of the great ocean of which it once formed the bottom or the shore. Its dominion extends from Bristol to Manchester; a wonderful dominion, holding within it vast storehouses of salt, whence brine has been drawn from time immemorial, telling of mighty periods in the history of the globe, of convulsions fraught with onward progress when the primeval formations gave place to those which, so to speak, are the links between antiquity and modern time.

Then we struck across the terrace, and through the wood to the brow of a rocky dell, where Old Jones seating himself on a stump, said he would await my return from a visit to the hermit. I descended the path, turned round the crag, came into the sequestered hollow, and saw at the upper end a small rustic lodge. Was that the hermitage? I pushed the half-door, it flew back, and disclosed a somewhat startling sight. Opposite the entrance sat the hermit, a venerable figure, whose long white hair and beard fall upon his black stuff gown, and an hour-glass and a skull, with its ghastly grin, rest on the table before him. The place smelt cold and damp; he attempted to rise but failed, and coughed distressingly. Presently, he said, in husky tones—"It's very kind of you to come and see a poor old man like me."

I leant on the lower half of the door, and invited him to shake hands. His cruel rheumatism prevented. Would he sell the skull? Should'nt like to part with the blessed relic. Would it hurt his feelings to be called old boy? A fit of coughing choked his reply.

I bade adieu, and while returning down the slope heard the door slam, and on coming to the top of the path saw Old Jones sitting with an air of simple-mindedness on the stump.

Now and then it happens that a party of visitors go away impressed with mysterious wonder at the hermit's revelations. A commercial traveller, who had been very communicative to the landlord overnight, was amazed on hearing the hoary recluse tell him whence he came, whither he was going, and that he intended to marry one day in the following week.

Then we rambled farther, making a circuit across the elastic sward to the rear of the eastern cliff, where, in the wooded hollow, an old gateway and fragments of masonry mark the site of the outworks, and passing these, treading on a thick carpet of sweet-smelling ground-ivy, we came to the castle on the crown of the height. The principal portion left is the red sandstone tower, which looks so picturesque when beheld from the vale, and charms the eye at this elevation by its colour, rising above the shattered walls of court and chamber, whose dilapidations are concealed by wood-sage and ivy, and the varied foliage of trees and bushes. Jackdaws fly in and out pertly chattering, as if courting admiration from the visitors, with whom this is a favourite spot, by its combined advantages of breeze, shade, and pleasant prospects. When, having scrambled down, we looked into the well, two jackdaws rose, as it seemed with difficulty, and flew out. They had been down, said the guide, to feed their young, which had fallen in perhaps on their first attempt to use their wings in the tower above: "and there they will die," he continued, "for they'll never learn to fly down there, and the old ones 'll soon get tired o' feedin' of 'em."

It was now breakfast-time; and we were, as Old Jones expressed it, "at the end of our round." As we sauntered back to the hotel he thought "the sun was hot enough, and more than hot enough, for dinner-time." I took the hint, and promised him a pint of ale in addition to his fee, the amount of which, as he told me without circumlocution, "should'nt be less than two shillings to make him feel comfortable." So I made him comfortable; and in return, while drinking the pint of ale, he promised to pay especial attention to any of my friends who might visit the park: "Only," he said, "be sure to tell 'em to ask for Old Jones, for they won't get on half so well wi' Young Jones."

Visitors have multiplied since Wem has enjoyed railway privileges, and an omnibus twice a day to Hawkstone, as the *Visitors' Book*, which was brought in with my breakfast, testifies. What a record that book is of English silliness, bad spelling, and abortive attempts at wit. One of busy Manchester's sons, who must have been a bagman, "would recommend all newley Married Parties to pass their Honeymoon at Hawkstone Park and Hotel;" another guest finds expression for his emotions with "The writer after a most pleasing ramble through the grounds of Hawkstone, had an opportunity of enjoying a most delicious cup of tea at the hotel." Among the best of the pleasantries was this *Ode to Young Men*:

"Smoking, spitting, chewing, drinking,
Spending always, seldom thinking;
Wishing, idling all day along,
Never any business done.

Witless, brainless, wanting wives,
Leading useless, stupid lives;
And wether tall, short, stout, or thin,
Think when they angle, they're sure to win."

While walking the five miles to Wem, the singular isolation of Hawkstone is more observable on looking back, than from the east, and is at once the eminent and refreshing feature of the landscape. In other respects the scene with its abundant hedgerows, its hay-fields, and breadths of grain, inspires an almost envious feeling of rural life.

Wem is one of those little agricultural towns which look as if they were asleep for five days of the week, and seemed very unwilling to wake up at the inspiring strains of a German band, which had wandered into this region of repose. I could not help wondering whether it really had allowed itself to be startled by the STARTLING DRAMA—CRAZY RUTH, that was announced upon the walls. Because the Roden flows by it, antiquaries have mistakenly thought it the site of a Roman station—Rutunium; and the historian remembers it as the source of the title, Baron Wem, conferred on Jeffries the Execrable.

I saw a group of tradesmen sitting on boilers, baskets, and barrels, near an ironmonger's door, talking about Solferino, and congratulated them on their sunny leisure. "Why not?" answered a pulpy burgess, "Thursday, Saturday, and Tuesday's our market-days; we does enough then to sit still t'other three." Happy Wem!

Solferino!—as I journeyed onwards under the trees and between the hedgerows, the word set me into an idle train of thought: of our own unworthy panics; of the Poet's "God bless the narrow seas that keep them out;" of Old Kaspar's moralisings, and of a philosopher's saying which has such a ring of true metal that I cannot forego the opportunity of letting you hear it, good-natured reader, even though it may be to you but a familiar repetition. With an alteration of

two words its application is the more precise. "What, speaking in quite unofficial language," inquires the philosopher, "is the net purport and upshot of war? To my own knowledge, for example, there dwell and toil, in the Austrian village of Dumdrudge, usually some five hundred souls. From these, by certain official enemies of the French, there are successively selected during the war, say thirty able-bodied men: Dumdrudge, at her own expense, has suckled and nursed them: she has, not without difficulty and sorrow, fed them up to manhood, and even trained them to crafts, so that one can weave, another build, another hammer, and the weakest can stand under thirty stone avoirdupois. Nevertheless, amid much weeping and swearing, they are selected; all dressed in blue; and sent away, at the public charges, say to the south of Europe, and fed there till wanted. And now to that same spot in the south of Europe, are thirty similar French artisans, from a French Dumdrudge, in like manner wending: till at length, after infinite effort, the two parties come into actual juxtaposition; and Thirty stands fronting Thirty, each with a gun in his hand. Straightway the word 'Fire!' is given; and they blow the souls out of one another; and in place of sixty brisk useful craftsmen, the world has sixty dead carcases, which it must bury and anew shed tears for. Had these men any quarrel? Busy as the Devil is, not the smallest! They lived far enough apart; were the entirest strangers; nay, in so wide a Universe, there was even, unconsciously, by commerce, some mutual helpfulness between them. How then? Simpleton! their Governors had fallen out; and, instead of shooting one another, had the cunning to make these poor blockheads shoot."

After the bad beer of London, the flavour of Shropshire ale becomes the more agreeable. What a pleasure to know that you are drinking genuine home-brewed and not ENTIRE sophistication! At every public house I heard the same story, "We brew our own." One hale old landlord said, "We don't put anythin' in the world into 'ur beer but malt and hops; and never sold a drop that we didn't brew 'urselves." When unable to attend to the operation himself, his wife undertook it: "Hur can dew it, if hur likes," he went on, "an' more 'n that: hur papered this here room. Nobody touched it but hur, an' hur got through wi' it in hafe a day an' a hour."

"Dra' me another hafe pint," says a rustic. "Here I are," shout the children playing in the road: "Hey! bobber, where be you a gween?" inquires the rustic of a neighbour who enters panting with heat; bobber being the equivalent of chum. "I beant a gween nowheres," answers the new-comer, and after cooling his throat, puts a question concerning the health of a haymaker with "I was a gween tew ax ye," and so forth. "Dear heart!" breaks in the hostess, "I'm sorry to hear him's no better."

The next house on the road is a very model of cleanliness, with a blue fireplace, blue settle, yellow walls, and the crane and pothooks, the candlesticks, and tins, as bright as silver, and a landlady to match. Sitting there sewing, she looked the perfection of neatness; and seemed proud to make over to her daughters the praises she received for the general brightness. "Iss sure," she said, "there's plenty ta dew when they dew that." She was proud too that one of her daughters was to walk in procession with the Women's Club at Ellesmere: "there was no such club when

she was young. Now every young woman got a guinea ten months after marriage, and half a guinea at the birth of every child afterwards."

A man whom I met on the road half an hour later told me "it was seven hafe miles to Ellesmere."—"No, I wunna," "ye shanna," and "Tell ye, I canna," sounded frequently in the talk of two smock-frocked boys and a little girl who were returning from school. I asked him who professed a knowledge of the multiplication table, how two puddings could be shared among three boys, and having mused a little space, he replied, with a grin, "One a piece for two, and nothin' for t'other."

About Welsh Hampton the road becomes hilly, and it is an agreeable change to survey a wider horizon while mounting the slopes, and to look down upon Newton mere in the deep green hollows. The country hereabouts, and away to the south of Cheshire, is remarkable for meres, some of them so truly circular, that their basins have been compared to a funnel: and where the meres occur there is least of running water. By-and-by the view opens finely to the west, and there is Ellesmere, spreading over more than a hundred acres, enlivening the landscape, and twinkling with countless ripples under the evening sun. The road runs along its margin and enters the town beneath the steep elevation once crowned by the castle, and between the long roofs which, supporting large cowls, indicate the place where the heavy barley crops of the neighbourhood are converted into malt.

Having secured quarters at the *Bridgewater Arms*, I retraced my steps to the eastern approach, and mounted to the top of the castle-hill, where an agreeable surprise awaits you. The ground, once

occupied by a baron's stronghold, is now laid out as a bowling-green; and what a delightful spot for pastime! Bordered by shrubs and flowers, it enjoys all the breezes, and a panoramic view which embraces nine counties. Flint and Denbighshire are seen shutting in the north-western prospect with long purple swells and rugged elevations; the triple-crested Breiddens stand up mountain-like in the south-west, whence the eye roams across the great plain of Shrewsbury to the Wrekin. And northwards appears the broad gleaming surface of the mere, dotted by the boats of anglers or pleasure parties, and the grand masses of elms in Oakley park, the seat of the Kynastons, and beyond, the hazy expanse of barley-fields. What a refreshing resting-place after a sultry day's walk! Judging from the numbers who were playing at bowls it is well appreciated by the inhabitants.

Did the stout knight, Roger le Strange, who held the castle here, watching the Welsh Marches with angry and envious eye, ever dream of the time when his gloomy walls would disappear and their site be made a playground for untitled folk? Or did the fair damsels who waited on Geoffrey Plantagenet's daughter Emma, at her marriage with David ap Owen, to whom Ellesmere was given by Henry II., anticipate the day when the rustic members of the Women's Club from miles around would hold their annual meeting on the castle-hill? Shrewsbury prepared a grand masque, or Corrody-feast, in honour of the bride; but the castle went the way of castles nevertheless, and with perhaps unusual rapidity, for already when Master Leland made his survey, he had to describe Ellesmere as a "place wher was a castelle."

CHAPTER V.

The Hill-top—Charming Prospect—Dee and Severn—Delamere Forest—Beeston Rock—The Wyches—The Heavens are telling—Whittington—Recreation in a Ruin—William Peveril and the Lady Melette—A Tilting-match in the Peak—Fitz-Guarine of Lorraine—Oswestry—The Castle Hill—Hen Dinas—Oswald's Tree—A Heap of Castles—Porkington from Brogyntyn—Scenery—Convenient Geology—Rock and Village of Llanymynech—The Dolphin for Anglers—The Tanat and the Quality—Fish-poisoners—Samlet.

At about three miles on the way, the road from Ellesmere to Oswestry crosses a high hill, whence, if you take pleasure in natural scenery, a view may be seen that will enkindle your admiration. The principal features are the same as those beheld from the bowling-green, but with variations, and everywhere cheerful. The morning, clear and bright as could be desired, made amends for the obscuring haze of the day before, and a westerly wind blowing brisk and fresh, completed the enjoyment of a halt on the hill-top, and by an exploratory ramble in the fields on the right of the road I saw the whole prospect.

Wales first attracts your eye, for there are the mountains: a bluish-green hollow receding into the dark upland shadows marks the vale of Llangollen, where flows the Dee, bright with all the brightness of Bala, and melodious with voices from the hills; thence ranging northwards if the day be clear, you discern

Chester, and beyond, the smoke of steamers that float in the estuary of the Mersey: scan the hill-country to the south-west, and you will discover the break through which bursts the Severn hastening from Plinlimmon to wind for many a league through the fairest of English landscapes. The hills rising in masses one behind another, bearing on their lower slopes dwellings, fields, and pastures, which merge with the dark brown waste above, are overtopped by a summit of the distant Berwyns. Rarely will you see in one sweep so grand a semicircle of hills. To the south appear the Lawley and Caradoc, the Longmynd, and other hills of Shropshire, with which we shall make closer acquaintance before the month be over. A pale cloud of smoke shows where Shrewsbury stands on its bold peninsula; and in the opposite quarter the Vale Royal is seen melting into the horizon, overlooked by the dark rough elevations of (Delamere) Dollimore forest, as the haymakers have it; and nearer Beeston rock stands prominently up amid the "collicular eminences" that dot the surface of southern Cheshire. That rock — a perpendicular mass of sandstone—is famous for the castle built thereon by Randal Blundeville, Earl of Chester, eight hundred years ago: now become a picturesque ruin. And there lies the region of salt-mines, and of the wyches or brine springs which began to flow long before Henry III. stopped the works at Nantwich to distress the Welsh by deprivation of salt, even from time immemorial, and still pour out abundantly their salubrious streams. Then let your eye range over the foreground, the "goodly prospect" of woodlands, parks, hamlet and hall, the bounteous growths that follow a thousand years of ploughing, and your admiration will perhaps find voice in a song

of thanksgiving. For my part I had to take out my flageolet and play *The heavens are telling*, sitting in the shadow of a hedge, before I could leave the hill-top.

An hour later I came to Whittington, a pleasant village with a red brick church, a tidy inn, and a castle, which has long been the subject of legend and lay. Standing by the roadside, and separated therefrom by a long straight pool, over which a bridge gives access to the main entrance between two massive round towers, the ruin is at first scarcely apparent, and you may fancy the place still protected by its moat. How delightful it was to exchange the scorching glare of a hard highway, for a carpet of grass and odorous herbs, and the cool shadow of tall wych elms! After looking at the old round tower, pierced by loopholes, a range of crumbling wall beautifully overhung by elder, hazel, ivy, and weeds, you will perhaps seek the mound, and there lie down within the ring of trees as I did.

The chroniclers tell us that Shropshire was part of the territory given by the Conqueror to Roger de Montgomery, who had defeated Edric the Forester, Earl of Shrewsbury, and forced him to seek refuge in Wales. On the forfeiture of Whittington by one of Roger's successors, it was made over to William Peveril, whose daughter, the Lady Melette, had by the fame of her beauty attracted many a mailed suitor across the wildest tracts of Derbyshire to the lone castle of the Peak. Her father, animated by the chivalric spirit of the age, proclaimed a tilting match, of which the prize should be the Lady Melette, with Whittington as dowry. How such a rare opportunity of winning fame and fortune drew a crowd of knights once more across the bleak brown moors and stony hills, to the lists under the walls of that grim strong-

hold perched on the rock above Castleton, we can easily imagine. Norman minstrel and English rhymer sang the story of that brilliant passage of arms; and told how that among the knights there rode, bearing a silver shield, Guarine de Metz, Sheriff of Shropshire, who, by his skill and bravery won the noble guerdon. Thus the family of Warren, who held possession for nearly four hundred years, first became associated with Whittington; and many a festive scene and daring exploit have these old stone walls witnessed. The quaint romance, hoary as they, tells the adventures of Fulke, grandson of him who espoused the fair Melette, and how that here he

> "Oft to his rich domain
> Welcomed many a crested knight,
> Welcomed many a lady bright.
> Fitz-Guarine of Lorraine."

I walked on to Oswestry, and there crossed the route of my former walk from Wolverhampton to Anglesey; and having taken a quiet look at the spacious church, and strolled under the handsome lime-tree avenue in the churchyard, I inquired for the good-natured surgeon who lends the key of the castle-hill. "Hauld on there, ye canna miss 't," answered the boy. The hill is a circular eminence enclosed by a fence in the western quarter of the town, and protected from mischievous idlers, it forms an agreeable resort for the inhabitants, whence they may survey town and country. Of the castle built thereon in the reign of Stephen, only a few small lumps remain peering above the ground, so there is nothing to intercept the view of surrounding objects. Hen Dinas, Old Oswestry, as it is now called, a hill-camp, on which five lines of circumvallation are traceable, though now overgrown with

trees, rises on the north, flanked by wooded heights. Here was the neutral ground between Offa's Dyke on the west, and Watt's Dyke on the east. Here Oswald, the christian king of Northumbria, fell in battle against Penda, the pagan king of Mercia, and from him, and the cross erected in his camp—Oswald's tree—the place derives its present name. Memorials of later wars abound in the neighbourhood, so that by whatever road you travel hence you will hardly fail to come upon ruins of some of the thirty-one castles built along this border soon after the Norman conquest. "No county in England hath such a heap of castles together," says Fuller, "insomuch that Shropshire may seeme on the west divided from Wales with a wall of continued castles." In a stroll through the town itself the frequency of Davies and Jones among the names will mark the nearness of the Principality, and if curious in philology you may study the transmutation of British into Saxon in the names of villages: Brogyntyn, for example, into Porkington, as mentioned by Pennant. At the same time it is noteworthy that scarcely a Welsh word has been adopted in the common speech of the people on the English side of the boundary line.

On leaving the town I noticed a lingering trace of primitive times in a few thatched houses, and a clogger plying his trade. Black roads and mining works at Sweeny mark the extent of one of the Shropshire coalfields which, as described by geologists, are the more interesting by their association with peculiar formations of this region. The Silurian and Cambrian rocks here and there thrust forward promontories, which we may suppose were once the arms of bays, into which timber was drifted by currents of the primeval sea, and there underwent conversion into coal. Hence

coal and limestone are found side by side; the one convenient for burning the other.

That we have passed for awhile beyond the region of railways is manifest by the lively spectacle of a stage-coach rattling past on its way from Shrewsbury to Newtown, drawn by four horses that seem to enjoy their work; and we may derive somewhat of quiet satisfaction from the thought that for a few days at least we shall not be disturbed by the shriek or snort of the locomotive. The road becomes hilly as we advance, we get pleasant views across the landscapes on each side of the border, until by-and-by a huge limestone cliff, that echoes from time to time with the quarrymen's blasts, closes the prospect on the right, and coming to a brow, we see in the valley below, the village of Llanymynech, and are presently within the limits of Montgomeryshire.

The advantage of having an English county for next neighbour is shown by a less obvious nakedness than is usual in a village of North Wales: the houses are not exclusively British in aspect; the church though very old in style is a modern building, and round about are gardens and orchards. The humblest-looking of the three inns, *The Dolphin*, is a favourite house with anglers, and plenty of fishing-gear did I see hanging on the wall and piled on the chairs, while inquiring for quarters. As usual during the summer, the answer was "Quite full;" so I went to the *Cross Keys*, which has a good-natured landlord, and takes in *Punch* and a daily paper.

The Tanat falls into the Vyrnwy about a mile above the village, and these are the streams that attract anglers from afar. "There's a good few comes from Manchester," said a man whom I fell in with during

an evening stroll, as he sauntered home with a basket of perch for supper; and, proceeding with his information, "we gets some of the quality here by times." I might have asked him which quality, good, bad, or indifferent, but did not. He was vehement in denunciations of the mischievous poachers, who had poisoned two miles of the Tanat by throwing in a few bushels of lime. "'Tis a cruel sight, Sir, to see the fish a-swimmin' on their backs a-workin' their gills like a blacksmith's bellows. But there's a reward offered, and I hawps (hopes) the thieves 'll be found out, and get their desarts." From his further talk I learned that most of the anglers prefer the Tanat "because it runs so purty-like atween the hills, and they catches samlet in it;" and that in his opinion the "backend" was the best fishing season. In this last colloquialism we see that the Northumbrian hind's term for autumn has a wide range.

CHAPTER VI.

Early Gin — London *versus* Country — Offa's Dyke — Up the Rock — Picturesque Hills — Vale of Severn — Tanat and Vyrnwy — A Breezy Seat — Llandrinio — The Treacherous River — Across Country — Cottage Hospitality — Timber Lugging — Fertile Land — The Foot of Breidden — Lake Bottom of the Foreworld — Volcanic Range — The Breast of Breidden — The Summit — Rodney's Pillar — Moel-y-Golfa — The Far-stretching Vale — The Confused Crag — A Dingle — The Turnpike School — "You'm ta coom in." — The Picker of Blue-Flats — Welshpool.

I WAS ready for a climb to the top of Llanymynech Rock on the morrow before the *Cross Keys* was awake. As I let myself out at a side door, a miner who stood waiting in the road for the opening of the grocer's shop, ran up and asked if he could "have twopen'orth o' gin?" The incident was characteristic. We commonly associate early rising with our ideas of country life. But in this particular London puts the country to shame. In London you can get really an early breakfast, or an early drink, and thousands of industrious folk rise at cockcrow, or long before cockcrow during the chilly months; while the country, that esteems itself so very exemplary, is still snoring in bed. An early breakfast at a country inn means something which by dint of a scramble, and a panting waitress, appears on the table by half-past eight o'clock; or if by rare good fortune at eight, the house thinks itself highly meritorious and wears its peacock's feather for the rest of the day. Should you wish to take advantage

of the morning coolness, and desire a cup of coffee before starting at five, the thing is clearly impossible. I have sometimes accomplished one half of my day's walk and come to a resting-place before the breakfast-things were cleared away.

The sight of the mighty cliff as you look at it from the village, is very striking: a mass of intermingled gray and brown towering aloft, grim enough in cloudy weather, but revealing many a touch of beauty when lit up by the morning sun. Take heed as you turn into the narrow lane that winds up the slope, for there below the hedge on the right traces of Offa's Dyke are discernible—of an earthen rampart which fronted by a ditch still survives, though obscurely, the wasting sap of Time, the rude trampling of feet, and ruder assaults of the spade. Question the rustics thereupon all along the Shropshire border, and you will hear them speak of it as "Awf's Dyke, which was thrown up long afore the time o' Willum the Conqueror." For more than 1100 years has that bank, stretching from Wye to Dee, kept alive the name of the Mercian king who raised it; but we need not envy the memory which lives also in the tale of an infamous daughter's crimes. From the head of the lane a few minutes' climb up a precipitous slope of rock and sward bring you to the summit, where you have your reward. The Breiddens which we saw from time to time in the last hour of our walk yesterday, now appear in all their picturesque beauty—picturesque from whatever quarter beheld. Though but of moderate elevation, their effect in the landscape is mountain-like, while with thickly-wooded flanks, rocky crest and screes, and broad green slopes of pasture, they present an appearance of finish that charms the eye, and is

so inviting that we must lengthen our day's walk for the pleasure of crossing them. To the east spreads a level country backed by low undulations, the Vale of Severn: to the west rise ranges of pastoral hills crowding one upon another, and sweeping round in an irregular circle towards the Breiddens, and swelling higher as they approach the river. Farms and pastures lie between—acres of cultivated greenness which outvies the verdure of Nature; and lines and squares of hedgerows doubled where the lanes wander; and cots nestling among trees, and woods so dark that the winding roads and footpaths appear whiter by contrast. Some places are as yet but half-revealed, for they lie too low to catch the sun, and the entrance to every vale that breaks the hill range is beautified by the slanting shadows that stream across: as if the "rear of darkness" were there imprisoned by misty bars of silver. The Tanat, winding in graceful twofold curve through the valley, salutes the morn with twinkling ripples. Here and there a ragged quarry gleams against the sun, where clouds of pale smoke mark the site of limekilns; and ever and anon the sudden roar of a blast proclaims that Labour has begun his daily task. And here and there are cottages looking so snug and pretty, with garden and orchard, and little field of wheat adjoining, that the scene becomes the more pleasing from its indications of rural welfare.

Reluctantly at length I left my seat on the edge of the crag where the breeze blew fresh and cool, bearing ever onwards the music of larks, intermingled with crowing of cocks and bleating of sheep: a concert of which the ear never tires. And when, soon after, I set out on the already sultry road, and looked back at the rock, it was hard to resist the temptation of a

return to its breezy heights. At the end of the village, within sight of the new railway bridge, the road crosses the Vyrnwy, a bright shallow stream enlivened here and there by a rapid, which forms the Shropshire boundary for about six miles farther down, and there falls into the Severn—the great river poured forth from the stormy hills of the Cymry to fertilise and enrich the mightier kingdom. I thought to walk straight to the Breiddens; but as a rural-policeman told me it would not be safe to attempt wading through the river, I turned aside at Llandrinio for about two miles to a bridge. Here the characteristics of the Severn are already remarkable: muddy water, a rapid stream, and a bed so deep that even from the hills the river is hardly discoverable in the landscape. Though narrow, it had a treacherous look, which justified the policeman's caution, and made me for the moment contrast it unfavourably with streams of lesser note. Now I struck across the meadows direct for a hollow in the hills that seemed favourable for the ascent, evading ditches, and scrambling through hedges, and finding myself at times an object of admiration to herds of cattle, for they ceased grazing to look at me as I passed among them. Coming presently to firm ground and a lone cottage, I took occasion to verify my track by inquiry, when the good woman who sat drinking a cup of tea with her lunch, invited me in "out o' the terrible heat." It was in truth oppressively hot: even the birds were mute, and I wished the tormenting flies would follow their example. Ah! if Sabrina's banks were only haunted by lotos-eaters, who would turn away from their allurements?

"With half-shut eyes ever to seem
Falling asleep in a half-dream."

The cottager, saying that there was "nothing like a drop o' tea to make a body hauld up even in hot weather," poured me out a cup, and gave bread and cheese therewith. As we talked, she told me that with the help of her two sons she managed to keep up the little farm left by the good-man, that one of the sons was "lugging" timber out of the clearing on the hill, "dangerous work," that kept her always thinking about him when he was away; that in high floods the Severn, which rises ten feet in ten hours, came into her kitchen, and made the whole valley look like a roaring sea. The other son entered while we were talking, and to give me a notion of the goodness of his land, said that he had grown oats seven years in succession on the same field without manuring, but because of a flood in the spring, had this year given the land a sprinkling of lime.

Emerging from under the trees that shelter the hill-foot, I came upon a slope amid brambles, thorns, magnificent ferns, and huge boulders; and was soon high enough to get the view across the vale of Severn: a vast scene of cultivation, bounded on the left by the imposing mass of Llanymynech rock. I tried with my telescope but could not discover the river which, here making a sharp turn round Breidden, leaves the north-eastern course that would have taken it to the Humber, for its south-easterly course across Shropshire. Sir Roderick Murchison, describing the geology of the region visible hence, shows the thin stratum of limestone which stretches unbroken from near the hill-foot to Bridgenorth in one direction, and into Lancashire in the other, to be a deposit formed for the most part at the bottom of a great lake. He shows too, that Breidden whereon we stand is a volcanic

formation, into which masses of igneous rock have been intruded subsequently to the date of the coal-measures; and he traces the line of volcanic action across the country to Hawkstone, and onwards by Market Drayton to Ashley Heath in Staffordshire, where it has heaved the New Red Sandstone up to an elevation of eight hundred feet.

When far enough up to clear the wood which covers the northern face of the hill, I turned westwards across open sheep pastures to the summit. There I found a large party of woodcutters busily felling larch and fir, birch and beech, and teams of horses lugging away the timber. The word is well applied to heavy work; but the rustics all down the west of Shropshire and Hereford apply it to light uses, and speak of "lugging the hay." The topmost height was left untouched, and I mounted under the welcome shade, treading in places on a carpet of wood-sorrel and ground-ivy, to the pillar—Rodney's Pillar. It is a rough stone column, built to commemorate the victories of the naval hero, which may be seen for miles around peering above the trees, and was never worth visiting except for its site. Now, however, there is nothing for enjoyment but the cool shade and balsamic odour of the larches; for the trees grow so tall and thickly as to intercept the view, and it is only by scrambling down to a break in the wood that you can get any prospect to the north.

"I b'lieve we bin," answered one of the woodcutters whom I asked if his party were going to clear all along the brow. "When shan 'e a done?" said another to a comrade for whose pipe he was impatiently waiting.

I returned to the pasture and resumed my walk to the west. To the south the view is limited: a green table-land terminated by Moel-y-Golfa, the second

summit of the Breiddens, while in the south-east appear the tops of some of the Shropshire hills. In about half a mile I came to the end of the ridgy summit of Breidden, a tremendous cliff diversified by screes and foliage, and to the brow of the western descent. Hence the view stretches far up the vale of Severn; you see the smoke of Welshpool some six miles distant, and on the edge of the pale cloud, a red spot amid the dark woods tells you where to look for Powis Castle, and farther and farther roams your eye between hills which seem to form a great glen, where green slopes melt away into the purple distance.

The descent looks inviting, for it will bring us to a narrow road that curves into a dingle. How that confused crag on Breidden's front appears to grow in height as we turn from time to time on the slope to gaze upwards! High aloft it frowns, bold and defiant as the race whose vigorous resistance to the disciplined invader, and whose conquest by the Roman legions it long ago beheld. The thought is suggestive, and we shall perhaps muse for awhile about Ordovices and Silures, about Caractacus the heroic, and his base betrayal, and it may be about Druids and their wonderful learning and mysterious rites.

The rough road winds round a bluff, along the margin of the dingle, and in exchange for the mountain breeze, we have a lively little brook running here and there through beds of wild mint. Gradually the rough road becomes a lane which leads us all too soon to a turnpike road, where the heat seems fiercer than ever. The mistress at the tollbar keeps a school, and it is a pretty sight, looking in at the open door to see her row of little scholars busy with book and needle.

While refreshing myself at *The Plough* with cider

and yelks of eggs, I heard the hostess, who saw one of her children sitting in the sunshine, cry to an elder girl—"What's hur a-settin' thar for?"

"I dunno what hur's a-settin' thar for," answered the daughter, as she ran to drag the little one from her seat, with "You'm ta coom in."

I was travelling on once more under my umbrella when a sturdy-looking woman overtook me at a quick pace, and inquiring the distance to Welshpool, told me she was going four miles beyond the town to see her son, of whose illness she had heard the evening before. Poor woman! she had started from Wolverhampton, and walked all night and all day without stopping, and had still eight miles to go; but though faint and foot-sore her motherly love urged her onwards without a pause. I had at times during the day thought it hard work to walk for pleasure; and now felt constrained to quicken my step, and speak a word of sympathy to the stranger. She talked about her boy: he was such a good boy, different from her other children, didn't like rough play, but liked to sit quiet, and read his book when he could get one. Her husband was a labourer in the iron works, and earned fifteen shillings a week, but was out of work; she could earn eight shillings a fortnight by picking out 'blue flats;' 'twasn't much for a family of eight children; but she tried her best to keep 'em clean and send 'em to school, and always took 'em to church o' Sundays, and her husband went too. But her boy—it was terrible to think of his being ill, and she not by to nurse him.

I put a piece of silver into her hand, and advised her to drink a glass of ale at the next public-house. She seemed half-surprised at the gift; then, still keeping on at the same brisk pace, said, "Oh, Sir! I had

but twopence in my pocket when I came away from home." A little farther, and I halted under the shadow of a great oak, and she promising to attend to my advice, paced onwards.

Welshpool is a town of English aspect, excepting the names over the doors, and market-days, when hats, such as the Long Parliament wore, may be seen on the heads of the women who come in from the country. The streets are hilly; the church is built on a hill-side, so steep, that when observing the pleasant view from the lime-tree avenue at the upper end of the churchyard, you can look down on the roof. The gravestones lie flat for the most part, with a laurel growing at the head, and a tuft of box at the foot. Some graves are marked by the shape of a coffin-lid in pebbles; and in one place I saw the outlines of five little coffins traced side by side in lumps of white stone.

If you lodge at the *Royal Oak*, you will have the pleasure of seeing the mail arrive (that is, until the railway is finished), with noise and horn-blowing, create a few minutes' bustle, and depart with similar display; and the stage-coach, which goes off soberly some minutes later. Moreover, in the crowd that gathers round to look at the ever-attractive spectacle, you will notice a few old-fashioned men wearing old-fashioned breeches. And if you wish to see the townsfolk at their recreation you will find that they have an excellent bowling-green.

During my evening stroll I saw troops of swarthy husbandmen come in from the fields, pacing very wearily, with rake and scythe on shoulder:

CHAPTER VII.

Sewin and Bull-Trout—Powis Castle—Panels and Pictures—View from the Roof—Powis-Land—Hot Sun, Cool Shade—An Introduction to the Brewer—Ancient Cellar—St. David—St. Andrew—St. George—A Health to Powis—Hilly and Daly—The Hafren—The Pedlar and his Legend—The Bluff—Montgomery—The Felon's Grave—The Herberts' Tomb—The Hill-Prospect—Scenery of Montgomeryshire—The Castle Ruin—Feats of Arms—Cherbury.

PICKLED sewin for breakfast provokes appetite, and the more so, as the fish itself, the same as the bull-trout of the Tweed, is excellent. The *Royal Oak*, as I was told, draws its supply thereof from Machynlleth, a place not far from the Dovey. My day's walk began with a visit to Powis Castle, which stands on the hill above the town, still meriting its ancient name—Castell Goch, or Red Castle. With ranges of terrace-walls running along the slope beneath, adorned by shrubs and trees, and the fretted iron gates that guard the entrance, the effect of the view is picturesque; but peep through the bars and you will see that the gates open but rarely, for the iron is rusty, and the steps within are coated with lichen and patched with weeds.

I walked round to the available entrance, discovered the housekeeper's room in the basement, and presented my note of admission. The whole place was in confusion with a troop of workmen busy over repairs and

preparations for the expected arrival of the Earl and family; but I saw the wainscoted corridor, panelled ceilings, suites of rooms, and good portraits and pictures, among which are specimens of domestic art, and the small old painting, which was lent to the Manchester Exhibition, representing Lord Herbert of Cherbury, lying under a tree waiting to fight a duel. Having shown me the rooms which I cared most to see, the housekeeper pointed out a stair leading to the roof, and gave me to understand that I might stay up there as long as I pleased. The view embraces a pleasant region of hill and dale, woods and pastures, the ancient Powis-Land; but your eye will turn with chiefest pleasure to the east, for there rise the Breiddens in their most picturesque grouping, and you can see the range stretching away with diminishing elevation into Shropshire. The view of the scene, as given in Sir Roderick Murchison's large quarto, conveys a good idea of the reality, and, if you turn thereto, will perhaps animate you with a desire to see the natural landscape, as it often has me. The whole country looked so glad under the hot bright sun, and the pleasure of spying out what seemed the coolest and shadiest nooks in the woods was so great, and to contrast the time when the "wilde Welshemenne" were to be kept in order, and the Sword of State was first brought to Powis, with the present, was so interesting, that I made good use of my leave, and whiled away an hour upon the roof.

Not without a few false turns, and opening here and there the wrong door, did I find my way down to the basement, where the housekeeper introduced me to the brewer, and he showed me the cellar: a gloomy place of massive piers and arches, which looks as if it were a relic of the original castle built by Blethyn ap Confyn,

at the beginning of the twelfth century. Mighty hogsheads now fill the arched recesses, each bearing a name proudly on its front—St. David; St. Andrew; St. George; Inkerman, Alma, and others—and looking very hospitable. So happy were the house and neighbourhood at the return of Colonel Clive from the Crimean war, that, as the brewer said, "we emptied St. David, and a 110-gallon cask besides." It is something in these mechanical days to find that a patron saint can be put to such generous use. The brewer drew a jug of ale and set it before me with a proper ale-glass, in the outer vault, where we had the advantage of daylight, and I drank right willingly to the welfare of Powis, while the Beer-master, as Germans would call him, told me, that he brewed "forty-five strike every week," and went sometimes to brew at Walcot, near Cherbury, one of the family estates: from which we may infer a very lively demand.

The jug emptied, I walked across the park to an outlet on the road to Montgomery, gratified by the diversity of hill and hollow. The road continues "hilly and daly," as old Leland has it, with here and there a rugged cliff rearing itself up for admiration. I was near the top of the first steep ascent, waving a bunch of honeysuckle sprays to keep the flies off, when a man driving a light cart overtook me, and offered to carry my knapsack; he had room for that, though not for me, as what with wife and market-gear, the vehicle was crammed. Such an offer was not to be refused on a hot day, so I gave him my burden, and had more enjoyment in my walk. Presently, at the foot of a descent there was the Severn, not deep and muddy, but shallow and bright, and with stony islets rising from its bed as befits a mountain stream. Once on a

walk from Bangor to Banbury I saw the rapid stream nearer its source, where it brawls and chafes over rocky ledges, and has not yet lost its native name of Hafren, and while crossing the flanks of Plinlimmon, I fell in with a Welsh pedlar, who told me the legend of the three rivers, whose birthplace is the famous hill; how that on the eve of their bubbling up, they talked together, each emulous of rising earliest for his start on the morrow. Severn, waking at the first peep of dawn, ran quickly down the hill, and chose a course through all the most beautiful towns and cities; Wye woke next, and finding himself anticipated, sped with many a curve and sudden bend into the best and richest land; and little Rheidiol waking last, saw that he had lost his chance, and exclaiming, "Never mind, I'll be first at the sea," tripped nimbly away to the western main at Aberystwith. "Told in Welsh," said the pedlar as he finished, "it was a much prettier story than in English."

It was drawing towards noon when I came near to a mighty rock, which, with its base buried in verdure, rears its brow high above the road—a perpendicular bluff, whereon once stood the haughty castle of Montgomery. It forms the northern termination of a ridge, or upper stage of the hill on which the town is built. Its precipitous flank is overgrown by tall trees, and among these wind rough and steep paths: the shortest way to the top of the cliff.

Having found my knapsack as promised at the *Wynnstay Arms*, I sauntered about for half-an-hour admiring the pleasant situation of the place. Though the county-town, possessing a market-hall and gaol, it is smaller than many villages, and there was something amusing in seeing its attempt to look busy

on a market-day. However, it is an agreeable locality, enjoying a cheerful outlook, from different elevations, all round the horizon, and is one of those places where economical living may be practised with advantage.

On awaking from my after-dinner nap at the inn, I saw a party of four sitting at table improving the occasion with lamb and peas. They had come to Montgomery for a holiday, and "to see if there was anything to be seen," and my object being similar, I proposed to accompany them, and was accepted. A townsman was picked up on the way, who had a wonderful story to tell about a felon's grave in the churchyard, on which the grass would never grow, thereby proving to the satisfaction of himself and others that the man there buried had been wrongly hanged. Thirty-eight years had elapsed since then, and the testimony of innocence was still to be seen. I thought to see a naked mound of earth; but there is nothing save a bare straight groove in the level sward, nearly hidden by overhanging grass, and notwithstanding incredulous smiles, our conductor averred that repeated attempts had been made to fill the groove and get grass-seeds to grow, but always in vain. Had not the Rev. —— written a book upon the subject, and would he have done so had it not been true? A declaration on my part that I would undertake to make grass grow upon that bare stripe, was received with an air of lofty pity.

The churchyard commands one of Montgomery's pleasant prospects. The church contains a large and curious tomb of the Herberts, bearing date 1577, and a row of eight sculptured children kneeling beside their parents. One of the eight represents him who,

as Lord Herbert of Cherbury, achieved a reputation which has not yet perished.

Then we walked to the clump which crowns a high hill, about a mile to the south-west of the town, from which, according to our authority, thirteen counties can be seen, and there had all the enjoyment which the shade of firs, a lively breeze, and a wide-spread view never fail to afford. Two of the party—a young married couple, out on leave from London—were inspired by something like rapturous emotions, as they gazed over the expanse of hill and dale: and truly to behold such a prospect is worth a day's travel. A long stretch of the vale of Severn appears in the landscape, curving far, far below; and though the river has already acquired its habit of concealment, except a gleam here and there at the bends, there is such a bounty of verdure, such a breadth of yellowing fields on sunny slopes, such a variety in the configuration of the hill-ranges, that your heart will be glad within you at the sight. Many a lofty summit rises into the view, seemingly an endless succession of mountains, among them, so is said, the crests of Cader Idris and Snowdon; but we saw them not, for a cold gray bank of mist hid the remotest west.

To us, reclining at ease on the soft grass, there was, however, ample scope for contemplation; and the more enjoyable, for the wind, "that grand old harper,"—to use a poet's personification,—made the blithesomest of music in the branches overhead. As we looked across the rolling heights of Montgomeryshire, noting some cultivated to the very summit, some wearing that smooth green carpet which delights the nibbling flocks, some of a chill moorland aspect, we felt that rural industry has a charm, and a power to awaken sympathy.

To uncouth rustics—sunburnt men and boys, whose hands are rough, and whose speech is unrefined, who are often pitied for what is called their ignorance—that fair prospect owes half its beauty. In those vales yonder, faintly discernible in the darker shadows, I had heard the thump-thump of fulling-mills, driven by nimble mountain brooks, and walked from cottage to cottage hearing the brisk sound of the loom, and had seen within men and women weaving flannel, and now and then glancing at the open Bible lying by their side. Dyer tells us how they carried on one part of their trade in his day:—

> "The northern Cambrians, an industrious tribe,
> Carry their labours on pigmean steeds,
> Of size exceeding not Leicestrian sheep,
> Yet strong and sprightly: over hill and dale
> They travel unfatigued, and lay their bales
> In Salop's streets, beneath whose lofty walls
> Pearly Sabrina waits them with her barks."

On our return from the clump we passed through a farmyard to the top of the castle-hill. Of the castle only a few insignificant fragments remain, but sufficient to show in relics of tower and wall, in steep mounds and smooth grassy banks and ditches, that it was once a mighty fortress. Built on the brow of the huge cliff, overlooking, if not overawing the vale of Montgomery, attack must have seemed hopeless to those who looked up at its sullen walls; yet the story of capture and recapture may be told of the castles along the western border, as of those which look into the vale of Tweed. The stronghold built here by Baldwin, the Conqueror's Lieutenant of the Marches, was assaulted and taken by the Welsh, who were never slack to repeat before the Norman their ancient boast against the foreign invader:—

> "Nor ever could the Saxons' swords provoke
> Our British necks to bear their servile yoke:
> Where Cambria's pleasant countries bounded be
> With swelling Severn, and the holy Dee;
> And since great Brutus first arrived, have stood,
> The only remnant of the Trojan blood."

The Welsh named the place Tre Faldwyn, and kept possession till 1093, when Roger de Montgomery drove them out, strengthened the castle, and called the little town that crouched at its foot by his own name. But the struggle went on: many a gallant course was run by combatants mounted on horses, for the breed of which the county had long been so famous that "a destrier of Wales" was considered a fitting present for the king; now one side, now the other gaining the mastery, until at length the place became a possession of the great house of Mortimer.

It was eight in the evening when we descended from the rock by the steep path under the trees; then having said farewell to the party with whom I had passed a few agreeable hours, I started for Cherbury. About fifteen minutes' walking brought me into Shropshire and across the course of Offa's Dyke, and at an easy pace between hedge-rows which filled the evening air with the scent of honeysuckle, I came to a late tea at the *Cross* at Cherbury.

CHAPTER VIII.

A Pretty Village—Flitting Swallows and Flowery Sepulchres—Lord Herbert of Cherbury—Free Range among the Raspberries—The Footpath-Way—Marrington Dingle—Ridge Hill—A Gift of Small Beer—Oak-trees in Shropshire—Little Weston—Up the Rack—Common on Corndon—Table Land—Grit Mine—Shelve—Playing at Mining—The Tough Hillside—Summit of Stiperstones—Metalliferous Valley—Harold's Edict—Broad Rock—Devil's Chair—Nipstone—Bog Mine—The Cider Cart—Lead in Shropshire—The Giants' Target—Linley—More—Lydham—A Damp Old Church—Bishop's Castle—Clun: Town and River—Quaint Features—The Cordwainer—Artist and Picture—The Lych Gate—Quaint Church—The Norman Keep—The Garde Doloreuse—The Hospital—A Bushel of Strawberries—Prayers for ever—Antiquities—Last Battle of Caractacus—Across the Hills—Hopton Village and Castle—Leintwardine.

To see one of the prettiest of villages under a bright blue sky, on first going out in the cool of the morning, is one of the sweetest of pleasures. The signs of fruitfulness which showed dimly in the evening twilight, appeared in full luxuriance in garden and orchard, and on every side tall trees waved their branches in the westerly breeze. Wheeling round and round the old square church-tower, darting, flitting to and fro, twittering all the while in exuberant delight, flew more swallows than ever I saw together, except in an autumnal gathering. Even without eyes you would have known it was summer, for mingling with the all-pervading hum, and the shrill noise of mowers whetting their scythes, came the delicious smell of new-mown hay.

The churchyard is so prettily planted with flowers that the place of sorrow has somewhat the aspect of a pleasure-garden; and the black and white tombstones, which are ornamented with funereal foliage sculptured on the top, scarcely look mournful when overhung by roses. There is moreover the charm of a simple muse in the epitaphs, one of which refers to the deceased as "parted from we."

Tradition tells of a castle which was built here by Ethelfleda, Lady of Mercia; and history of an Augustinian priory, of which a portion remains in the present church; something for the solace of antiquarian sentiment. The villagers will tell you they never heard of the castle, but they have heard of the Lord Herbert, who, by deriving his title from this pleasant village, has made its name known to every lover of old books. There is pleasure in thinking of a man who was honest and courageous as a courtier, and a maintainer of the privilege of independent thought at a time when sycophancy was esteemed as the chief duty of a servant of the state; who was the intimate friend of Hobbes, and contemporary with Shakespeare and Ben Jonson; to whom Ben addressed an epigram, commencing—

> "If men get name for some one virtue; then
> What man art thou that art so many men,
> All-virtuous Herbert! on whose every part,
> Truth might spend all her voice, fame all her art."

Remembering the portrait of him which we saw at Powis, we are prepared for the fanciful conceits met with in his writings, and for the passage in his autobiography, where he records his having a sign from heaven approving the publication of his deistical treatise, *De Veritate*.

The landlord met me as I returned from my stroll,

and would have me see his garden. Great was his pride therein. Could those prolific rows of peas, those onion-beds, those raspberries, those lettuces, those appletrees, be matched anywhere else in England? I smelt, tasted, and admired as became a Londoner, and was rewarded by a rose and free range of the raspberry-plot; an agreeable preparation for breakfast.

Having once looked across from the Longmynd to the Stiperstones, I now wished to look from the Stiperstones to the Longmynd, and promised myself no little pleasure in walking direct thither by field-paths, and along pathless hill-sides, there being no road. Beginning with the churchyard path, the course lies easterly, towards the heart of Shropshire. "Ye munna go where hur's a-gwine," said a mower, pointing to a woman in the distance, "ye mun turn to the left." Trees soon hid the village, and mine was the enjoyment of following a footpath-way, now between a sheltering hedge and acres of wavy grain; now across a meadow where the path is half obscured by upspringing grass; now falling, now rising, and so field after field to a deep and sudden plunge, into a wooded hollow, where sounds a cheerful mill-clack. When at the foot of the steep path, I saw a sparkling brook dancing along in a stony bed, towards the little mill, and looking northwards, precipitous slopes of wood, offering so shady a retreat, that my desire to explore was stimulated by a desire to escape the heat.

This is Marrington Dingle, a place in which to lounge away a summer day, listening to the voice of the water, wandering from one cool nook to another for nearly three miles, enjoying the combined charms of trees, thickets, rocks, and solitude, and the opportunity of studying the strata at Whittery quarry. The scene

is not only noticeable for its beauty, but as presenting a characteristic of Shropshire, as may be seen on the Ordnance map. Here and there a deep and abrupt hollow occurs between the hills, or on the course of some little stream. Badger Dingle, between Shiffnal and Bridgenorth, is a well-known example much resorted to by visitors, but nature having there been largely assisted by art and rhododendrons, it lacks the wild charm of Marrington.

Not without reluctance did I emerge into the sunshine, and return to my path which mounts the eastern side of the Dingle, and thence rises up Ridge hill, reaching an elevation that commands a view far into the western mountain-land. Farther on, at a lone cottage, where I inquired about the way, the old man brought me out a mug of small beer with his answer, saying, "Ye mun be thirsty such a day as this'n;" and to my remark concerning the fields of grass still unmown, he replied that, "the hay was all'ys backerly on the hills." His directions to "hauld on yander," enabled me to find the path which now ran across large wheatfields, where vigorous oaks stand here and there amid the grain, reminding us that Shropshire is said to contain more oak-trees than any other county in England. There is an aspect of newness about the landscape here, as if the farms had been but recently reclaimed; and looking eastwards we can see the end of the cultivation.

The path led me to a new red brick farm-house—Little Weston—where the old man had advised me to call for further directions. Farmer Davies was not only willing to give information, but he invited me in, and drew a pint of cider, and would have had me eat, had eating been possible under such a temperature as

then prevailed. I drank the cider, and starting anew, came presently to the 'rack'—that is, a dim track leading up the wild hill, which there rose in my way, a sudden limit to the cultivation. Near the top, I met a hale old man, who, as it happened, was Farmer Davies's father, and ready to say "Quite right, too," when told of his son's refreshing gift. He had something to tell about certain parts of the landscape, and, stretching his staff towards the peak of Corndon—"It looks like a point; but there's hundreds of acres up there of the best and levelest common in the country."

The 'rack' ascends to a lonesome table-land, patched with gorse, bracken, and rushes, where you hear the wailing cry of the curlew, and see a few stony, half-starved fields of oats: signs of agricultural enterprise, and of growing profit to the Earl of Powis. While crossing the patchy level we have a good view of Corndon rising grandly and mountain-like on the right, and of brown ridges in front, the farthermost being the Stiperstones. Presently we come to a descent, and see the intervening valley—a ragged spot cut up by mines, and dotted by a few cottages. My way lay past the Grit Mine, which, as the engine-man told me, is six hundred feet deep, and nothing like so rich in lead as it used to be. "You'n better go past them housen," he said, pointing the way up the next slope. Beyond the slope appears the sequestered little hamlet of Shelve, standing on uneven ground, with a compact little church, and without a public-house, retaining the look of the good old times. Another mile of rough ground, leaving Penalley to the right, brought me to the foot of Bleak Hill, as Stiperstones is called by the Ordnance surveyors, and to a lane that leads up towards the Devil's Chair. 'At Potter's

Pit, a newly-opened lead-mine, in which a profitable vein had been struck, the operations seemed like playing at mining; two boys breaking the ore, and one man washing it with a sieve in a tub of water. A little farther, and the lane ended on the open hill-side, and then I mounted straight for the rocks. Very toilsome work it was wading through tough ling up to my knees, while swarms of flies buzzed about my face. However, it adds to one's experience to make acquaintance with the sun under trying circumstances. And in this instance, to see how the rocks, which, from below, seemed to be mere ragged stumps, increase in magnitude on coming nearer, makes you somewhat mistrustful of eyesight. Having reached the summit, I lay down in the shadow of the rock, and went to sleep.

Some forty minutes later I looked across a green valley to the Longmynd; its outline was but dimly visible, for the haze of sultriness hung over the landscape. I could see however its position with regard to Stiperstones, and how that the latter, in common with the Wrekin, Caradoc, and other principal hills of Shropshire, is long, narrow, and ridge-like, ranging with a gradual rise from south-west to north-east. Along its western base you see but little verdure, for there stretches the metalliferous valley which extends northwards beyond Minsterley; a valley remarkable for the peculiarity of its geological phenomena, and liability to sudden floods, which carry away at times the bridges built of stone. Only of late years has it been made accessible by roads. I had come to the upper end of the hill, and to the highest of the series of rocks—the Devil's Chair, though why so named I could not discover. Perhaps the natives used to regard them as supernatural. Their appear-

ance is indeed singular, owing to their columnar formation, and their inclination towards the lower end of the hill, as the back-fins of a fish towards the tail, so that looking at them from a little distance, and observing how they protrude from the rough brown ridge, you may fancy them the bare spines of some fossil monster, huger than imagination ever dreamt of. In general appearance they reminded me of certain sloping rock masses which I had seen in the Riesengebirge. With these curious basaltic formations, the old holly-wood at its northern extremity, and the contrasted prospects which it commands, the Stiperstones Hill is as interesting to the ordinary wayfarer as to the geologist. An old historian makes Harold the builder of at least one of the piles to mark his victory over the Welsh; but the hand that built them was mightier than his. He however, by way of keeping the peace, ordered that every Welshman found on the eastern side of Offa's Dyke should have his right hand struck off.

I walked from crag to crag along the downward slope. Each has a name: Broad Rock; Devil's Chair; Cranberry Rock; Nipstone Rock; Rock House—beyond which we come to the flank of Radley Hill. Corndon shows well in the view, and the thickly-wooded Linley Hills finish the prospect to the south. Then edging away I descended to Bog Mine—a name that denotes the past condition of the ground here at the hill-foot. The breeze on the ridge had restored my appetite: but my inquiry for a public-house was answered by a miner, "They 'm gone away;" and the only resource he could tell me of, was a cider-cart, at which there could be had, at all events something to drink.

The cart was a wagon containing half a dozen barrels of cider, one of which was tapped and placed peeping out at the tail, convenient for draught. The woman to whom it belonged had drawn up under the shadow of a shed, so, availing myself of the same screen, I sat down, took a pint of cider, and making an exploration of my pockets, discovered a forgotten crust, wherewith I dined. On the opposite side of the road, a number of miners lounged in the sunshine, enjoying the idleness of pay-day, and calling now and then for "Another point missus!" Perhaps hard cider at fourpence a quart is not one of the drinks which

> "never fails
> To kittle up our notion;"

for they appeared none the happier, nor was their talk any the livelier for their potations. The woman told me that she brewed forty hogsheads of cider every year, and came up out of Herefordshire to find customers along the road. 'Twas hardish work travelling in the hills; but the miners always lightened the load.

Judging from what I saw here, mining operations in Shropshire will hardly compare with those of Durham and Northumberland either in their mechanical appliances, or the energy of their labour. The yield of lead from this county in 1858 was nearly three thousand tons. It was sufficient eighteen hundred years ago to induce the Romans to dig: one of their workings is still to be seen on the Linley estate, others have been met with along the border, and in the museum at Shrewsbury is a pig of lead bearing the Roman stamp.

I continued my walk up a rough hilly by-road along the flank of Stiperstones, and presently had an excel-

lent view, on looking back, of the whole length of the hill, and its stony spines. The last and lowest outburst presents a very confused appearance, some of its ribs being broken or bent, leaving the front so riven and shattered, that you might fancy it the target against which the giants had practised their rock-throwing. Gradually the rough brown waste is left behind, and by the precipitous descent of a smooth grassy hill you may slide or roll down into a valley, and there find a level road which accompanied by a talkative affluent of the Teme, leads you under the woods of Linley, through the park, past the Lake and Linley Hall, to the little village of More. You will tarry a few minutes to look at the curious squat-towered church and windows of stained glass; then walk on by the field-path to Lydham, another little village with a little church, which would furnish an apt illustration of Lord Brougham's anecdote of a damp old church. This outlying corner of Shropshire appears to have been sadly neglected as regards matters spiritual, if the condition of the houses of worship may be accepted as an evidence of the condition of pastor and people. Here and there I heard of a new vicar who would not be content with the old sleepy ways, who sought to enlighten as well as to edify his flock; and Lydham is perhaps a case in point, for I found workmen in the church replacing the clumsy old tumble-down seats by decent fittings.

Another two miles of road and path through a fertile country, sprinkled with handsome trees, and I came to Bishop's Castle: a hilly town so named from having once been the site of a castle belonging to the bishops of Hereford. It is the little metropolis of a large

rural district, and somewhat proud of its busy market and fairs.

I slept at the *Castle Hotel*, and resumed my southward walk on the following day. The old square church-tower looks well as you descend the street to the churchyard, from which a footpath makes a short cut to the road beyond. The church was rebuilding, every part new, except the tower, and with regard for the grace and fitness of architecture. As I looked back on the town, its pleasant situation in a diversified landscape struck me as enviable; and when pacing onwards, I found a road possessing many of the charms of a lane—breadths of shade, and roses, foxgloves, honeysuckle, nuts and elder-blossom,—with ripening fields behind the hedges, and glimpses of wooded hills where gate or stile breaks the tangled screen, I had unexpected enjoyment in my two hours' walk to Clun.

Here again we have a little market town, which shows more signs of former importance than of present activity, where the feudal ruin finds itself playing the part of a not ungraceful neighbour to the Mechanics' Institute, with its lectures and reading-room; where the ancient bridge, narrow, rugged and bestriding the lively Clun with five low arches separated by projecting angular piers, is an object that will inspire you to look at it from more than one point of view. So old is it, that the date of erection is unknown; but we shall hardly be romantic in imagining that the first garrison of the castle, which was built in the reign of Stephen, marched across it many a time. How prettily the clear water runs through the arches carrying gleams of sunlight into the ripply shadow! Then on the left, a little beyond the bridge, stands an old timbered house,

tenanted by a quaint old cordwainer, who, if he sees you prying, will perhaps come forth and point out the date, 1613, on one of the beams. And it may be he will invite you in, as he did me, to show you how low the ceilings are, how thick the beams, how stiff the floors. To my congratulations on his having such an antique place to work in, he answered, "Yes, Mr. Goodall, a genelman from London, said 'twas a nice old place ; and he took the pictur' o' me a-settin' in it at work. Yes, Sir, the pictur' o' me, and the old workshop. He was a very pleasant genelman: he sent me down some bottled porter; and I like it better'n our Shropshire ale."

The cordwainer in his habitation was not the only picturesque subject which took the artist's fancy at Clun; for one of his recent pictures represents some of the quadrupeds and personages of the town, and when you walk up to the churchyard and look at the venerable lych-gate, you will perhaps recognise it as forming one of his properties.

As in some other places, the clerk's wife lent me the key of the church: a convenient arrangement for the traveller. The interior of the building harmonises with the picturesque touches of the town, by reason of its age and departures from uniformity. There are so-called thick Saxon pillars, round arches, and zigzag mouldings: the north aisle shows the timbers of the roof: the pulpit has carved panels; the font is a heavy basin of sandstone supported by a group of columns, and the oaken seats and pews are so curiously planned, so irregular in height, so unnecessarily thick, so rudely finished, that you might fancy they were set up at a time when the only available tool was the adze, and prentice boys were the only carpenters. On some

of the pew ends nearest the pulpit there are attempts at ornamental carving; but most are as rough as the seats, and appear from the mortice-holes pierced through them, as if they were adaptations of old waste timber. I tried a few of the seats, and could come to no other conclusion than that the church of Clun is a place of penance.

A patriarchal yew, which looks as old if not older than the church, adorns the churchyard. The stem by continual growth resembles a grove in itself, of gigantic circumference.

Then I called on a learned antiquary who, responding with ready good-nature, accompanied me to the castle: a short stroll across boldly undulating pastures where thickly-sprinkled trees look somewhat forest-like. There on a grassy knoll round which the river makes a horseshoe curve, rises a square Norman keep, still in good preservation, and besides this you see but few traces of masonry. And this was the stronghold of the Fitz Alans, one of whom took so resolute a part against Stephen in behalf of Maud, and in her cause lost all but his loyal name. And this was one of the heap of castles which were built along the Marches to hold in check the desperate unyielding Welshmen. Valour and vengeance have here wrought daring deeds, as we may read in history or romance; and here also the spell has been exercised which invests so many parts of our isle with ever-freshening charms. Here, as we are allured to imagine, stood the castle of Garde Doloreuse: here that trusty knight Sir Raymond Berenger fought his fatal battle with the wild tribes of Wales: here sorrowed the Lady Eveline, watched from afar by Damian de Lacy, and attended by Rose, the honest daughter of the doughty Fleming, Wilkin

Flammock. Here Father Aldrovand, who was a black monk of Wenlock, rekindled his military fire; and here it was the butler replied to the bibulous weaver, that March and October "for thirty years he had dealt with the best barley in Shropshire."

While the church has a monument to Sir Robert Howard, the town has on its outskirts a memorial of Howard Earl of Northampton, Lord Keeper, in the form of an hospital for decayed tradesmen. The antiquary thought this worth showing, and led me thither, and we saw the quiet retreat—a quadrangle inclosing a garden and itself inclosed by gardens: and the chapel, and warden's house, and the humble residences of the inmates, for all of whom my conductor had a word of friendly greeting. One man had papered his room with engravings cut from the *Illustrated News*; others took pride in their garden-plots, and had proofs of their labour to show in fruit, flowers, or vegetables: one told me he had sold during the season more than a bushel of strawberries. While we sauntered the bell began to ring for afternoon prayer, and the old men came forth wearing their long gray gowns, and crossed the quadrangle to the chapel; for the statutes declare:—"We do ordain and establish that in the said Hospital there shall be, for ever, One Warden and Twelve Poor Men, who shall wholly give themselves to the Service of God, and to pray for the Peace, Tranquillity, and Concord of all Christendom." And so twice a day the poor men, now sixteen in number, meet together in the chapel, wearing on Sundays an ample blue gown figured with the badge of a white lion on the sleeve.

If you love the angle, pretty scenery, and relics of antiquity, sojourn for a while at Clun. The neighbour-

hood will repay all your explorations. On the uplands, seen as you look west from the castle knoll, Awf's Ditch is traceable; a morning's walk to the south will bring you to the ancient camp—Gaer Ditches, and to Coxwall Knoll, on the bank of the Teme, which some antiquaries believe to be the scene of the last battle of Caractacus. As others put in a claim for other situations—the Breiddens, or Caer Caradoc in the heart of the county, it may perhaps interest you to explore the Knoll, and read at the same time the animated account of the fatal conflict by Tacitus. The remains of an ancient camp, constructed of flat stones, is still discoverable on the summit. In fact, it would be difficult to avoid antiquity in your walks, for many a crest by its name Castle hill, or Castle ring, preserves traces of the ancient encampment. Your sojourn at Clun will be the more agreeable, seeing that the *Buffalo*—which, by the way is the crest of the Walcots of Walcot—is one of the best country inns in Shropshire.

Desirous of looking into the valley of the Teme on my way to Ludlow, I started late in the afternoon for Leintwardine, taking the shortest route shown by the map, which brought me ere long to the brŏw of a high hill whence there is a broad view over a country of much wood, and into the valley of the Clun. Though the hill-side be steep and rough with fern and heath, it offers a plenteous feast of bilberries—wimberries, as the rustics call them—very refreshing in sultry weather. Onward stretches the rough track into a lonely district, falling and rising on long steep slopes; onward into a lane, across shaggy pasture, then suddenly down through an oak-wood to the secluded little village of Hopton, of which the church and castle are seen from time to time between the trees. Hitherto we have

had a varied prospect of wooded hills; now the country is comparatively level, and fruitful in orchards and grain. There is a noticeable change too in the people or rather in their speech, which is blunt in expression, and coarse in quality. "Goo up that thar piece," said a woman, as she pointed out the path across the corner of a field: and 'iss' does duty for yes.

The castle stands in a meadow on the right as you leave the village. It is a small square edifice, with a narrow pointed door, and resembles a border peel of the north-country.

Longer and longer grew the shadows as I went on, and when I came to Leintwardine, about nine miles from Clun, and leant upon the parapet of the bridge while the maiden at the *Lion* blew up the fire and prepared tea, the shadows had deepened into dusk, and the radiance of the western sky was fading from the rippling river.

The inn was well-nigh deserted, for landlord and household were busy at the hayfield, eager to finish, for the morrow would be Sunday. It was midnight when they came in with the last load.

CHAPTER IX.

Real English—Natural Attractions—Confluence of Clun and Teme—A pleasing View—A Tramp to Downton—A Rustic Village—Little Church—Gladness without, Thanksgiving within—Psalm-Tunes in a Fernbrake—Downton Park—Cottage Philosophy—A Tune for a Drink—"Not as we be Ranters"—Bromfield—Ducks, Veal, and Pudding—Onny and Teme—A Storm—The *Feathers* at Ludlow.

LINETERDYNE, as the natives pronounce it, is just within the northern edge of Herefordshire; its dialect smacks of the ancient Mercian, as will appear from even two examples:—"Jarge, ya be ta cum hoam." "Oil (I'll) cum to ya." If it be true, as ethnologists say, that we have here, and in the western portion of Shropshire through which we have travelled, the most perfect representation of real English character, are we to conclude that the speech is also the real English? Apart from the attraction which the solution of this question might afford, the visitor may catch trout or grayling in the Teme; that is with permission of the fishing-club, and without their permission he may wander over an interesting neighbourhood. Ruins, camps, battle-fields, and hills of charming prospect, all lie within the compass of a few miles. Of the hills and woods we shall see a league or more in our coming walk: the historic sites will interest us a day or two hence when we approach them from another direction.

Late haymaking induces late rising; so that I had time enough for a walk across the meadows to the confluence of Clun and Teme; and for a saunter round the churchyard, before the *Lion* was ready to supply a breakfast. The church has a tall square tower, a new chancel and a few sculptured tombs, and stands pleasantly environed by masses of foliage, whereof the most part is the leaf of apple-orchards.

The heat was already oppressive when, having reached the summit of Totteredge Hill, I sat under the shadow of a thorn to look back upon the village. There it lay in the quiet vale, houses and trees prettily intermingled all down the long slope to the bridge; and there along the river, spread the pastures that seemed to be faintly smoking with the heat, all encompassed by tracts of wood and copse, and cultivated hills. Intending to walk no farther than Ludlow—about ten miles—I had full leisure to recline and contemplate; or to look from the gate in the field beyond, down upon the windings of the Teme, or across the pleasant landscape which was once a possession of the Mortimers.

Presently there was a sudden disappearance of the foot-path, so I took a south-easterly course across the large fields that overspread the uplands, squeezing through the hedges, and trudging across acres of furrows that seemed parched as the desert, and descended upon Downton, a little village where you may enjoy all the charm of seclusion and the rustic aspect of the olden time. Rough narrow lanes wind away from it to the field-gates, grand old trees encircle the homestead, old moss-encrusted thatch appears here and there behind luxuriant hedges, a pond slumbers beneath a rocky escarpment, and reflects the overhanging

brambles, nettles and ferns, and farming-gear lies about in happy confusion. There is no street: nothing but farm-buildings and a few cottages, and a church; and though on high ground, the view wherever you look is concealed by trees. The church stands on a site somewhat elevated, in accordance with the ancient practice, and matches the village in size and appearance. Every thing about it is small: a small porch, a smaller door, smaller bell-turret, small allowance of light, and fittings of but small advance beyond primitive rudeness.

Did you ever, reader, step silently into the porch of a village church on a quiet Sunday morning, and there sitting down in cool shadow, listen to the hum without and the hum within: the hum that makes the sunshine seem alive, while insects like little sparks of light dance in the beams that slant across the entrance, and swallows flit past with their shrill glad scream, and the cock's indolent crow seems softened down to suit the hour, and all around is heard the sweep and the cadence of murmuring leaves; and within voice answers to voice, and the few who are gathered together unite their rustic tones and say, "O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving: and show ourselves glad in Him with psalms." If you have done this, you will be ready to acknowledge with me that it is among the sweetest of our Sabbath-day privileges.

After a while I went on, and burying myself in a fern-brake, on the edge of Downton Park, played a few psalm-tunes greatly to the astonishment of passing rustics, who, "wondered where the noise came from." The Park is a delightful place for a ramble, abounding

in cool coverts, and pleasant slopes and rocky nooks along the course of the Teme. On its outskirts are now to be seen the new farm-buildings and other improvements indicative of a new proprietor; and soon a new church is to be built not far from the lodge, in a situation more convenient to the parish than the present remote little edifice. At a roadside cottage where I called for a drink of water, the woman was making a gooseberry-pudding, liking as she said to "give her husband and the two boys a bit of something comfortable for their Sunday's dinner. It only seemed right for people as worked hard all the week. She had expectations of good from the new proprietor: children would be able to get a bit o' schoolin', and indeed they wanted it badly, for the ignorance of the people was onbelievable: grown up boys couldn't read a word. 'Twas better though than it used to be, for she could remember when country folk used to seem to care for no martal thing but drinkin'." In return for the cool draught which she had fetched for me fresh from the spring in the orchard, I played a lively hymn-tune, which, she said, made her feel as if she wanted to sing. She had heard it once among the Ranters; and then came the qualification, "not as we be Ranters; we always goes to church; but I went to hear 'em once."

I came to the *Clive Arms* at Bromfield just as the damsel, seeing the folk coming out of church, began to lay the cloth. The landlord said, in reply to my inquiry, "Perhaps you wouldn't mind dining with us; but we haven't got anything besides a couple o' ducks and a loin o' veal, and something of a pudding:" a bill of fare which certainly needed no apology. And is it not one of the treats of a ramble, to drop in under a sign where the ale is good, and dine with the family?

The village derives some advantages from contiguity to the plantations of Oakley Park and its situation on a spot near where the Onny—a river that comes down from Stiperstones—falls into the Teme. In a stroll along the brink of the stream below the junction, you may discover a fragment of a Benedictine cell, once a dependency of St. Peter's Abbey at Gloucester. The afternoon was too sultry for much exertion, and the most agreeable place seemed to me to be standing over my bootsoles in shallow water under the arch of the bridge watching a happy brood of ducks. Anon, the sky grew black, whirlwinds began to sweep the leaves, and start clouds of dust spinning madly round and round; and soon there was a roar in the woods, and a hollow moan among the branches, and swiftly flew the lurid clouds from the north-west, and down fell the rain in torrents, while the thunder thundered, and the lightning flashed in such forked fury as would have made an ancient Greek believe that old J. Tonans was exceedingly wroth.

In the evening I resumed my walk. So partial had the storm been, that half a mile onward I found the road dusty as ever. The *Feathers* at Ludlow, an ancient timbered house, is the most picturesque hotel in the county, and the town ranks with Shrewsbury as among the most interesting of boroughs. We will lodge in the ancient house, and admire the panelled walls and carved chimney-piece of its principal room; and to-morrow shall be a day of happy exploration.

CHAPTER X.

Musing on Whitcliff—The Prospect—Town, Hills, and River—Whitcliff Wood—Mary Knoll—Comus Wood—Landslips—The Castle Walks—A Stupid Trophy—The Castle Court—The Keeper and the Keep—Roger de Montgomery—The Range of Ruins—The Princes' Lodgings—The Baron's Prison—Reminiscences—Kings and Barons—Quarrels and Ambushes—Fulke Fitz Warine—Besiegers on Whitcliff—Young Fulke's First Fight—Marriage and Betrayal—The Welsh Princes—The Fatal Journey—The Lord President—Parliament, and the Prince of Orange—Milton's Masque of Comus—Simple Incidents, Immortal Verse—A Lesson—The Market Place—Unhappy Poultry—A Clean Brat—The Church—The Churchyard—Ludford—A Trip with Temperans.

I LIKE a second visit, especially to a well-favoured locality. The sense of pleasure is enhanced by recognition of scenes which have lingered in memory, by revival of recollections, and the comparison thereof with reality. There is retrospect, moreover; and the thought of the former and the present time as regards one's-self. So mused I early on the morrow, sitting on the brow of Whitcliff, while my eye roved over river and town, from castle to church, and to the hills—Brown Clee, and the graceful cone of Titterstone; and I thought of my ascent to that prominent summit eighteen months before, during an autumnal ramble with Temperans, and of the pleasurable incidents of our first prospect of Ludlow.

Whitcliff is one of the sides of a defile alike high and

precipitous, through which flows the Teme, composed of that kind of sandstone which geologists distinguish as Upper Ludlow rocks. The front of the precipice is rough, and deeply excavated here and there by quarries, while its brow is decorated with fern and foxglove, gorse, thyme, and dandelion, as if to multiply pleasures for those who recline thereon. The river has a sharp curve, embracing the town which lies beneath us on the northern bank, and being constrained to fall over two dams, and keep two mills from idleness, it has a lively current, and hastens round the shoulder of a hill below on its way to join the Severn near Worcester. We see a bridge towards the two ends of the curve, the upper abutting upon the crag on which stand the ruins of the castle, so thickly veiled by summer leafage that all we can see of it is the parapet of a tower. The northern bank slopes down to the level of the river, and has a broad and fertile margin of gardens and orchards which insinuate their verdure here and there among the houses that become more and more thickly clustered as they ascend, until the handsome church-tower forms, as it were, an apex to the great pyramidal mass of habitations. Upwards, the view extends beyond the bold bluff to wavy regions of pasture; downwards it stretches far away to the elevated region where the Clees are most conspicuous; and the uplands sweeping round lift up a stripe of green and a fringe of trees which overtop the highest point of the Ludlow pyramid.

A view with such features is one that you could gaze on for hours without weariness, and Whitcliff being lofty enough to catch the breezes, there is nothing lacking that can add to your enjoyment. What a pleasant resort for the townsfolk!

Before returning to the town we will take half an hour's walk along the road that crosses the rear of the cliff, and there strike into the green alleys of Whitcliff Wood. A south-westerly course brings us to Mary Knoll, a height crowned by a few fir-trees, whence you look down into a deep, narrow, and prettily-wooded dingle, which looks so cool and shady that you would like to plunge forthwith into its recesses. The sight of greenness is refreshing, and your curiosity is excited to know what are the features of the dingle beyond the bend where it subsides into the broad vale of Wigmore. On one side Bringwood Chace is partially visible; on the other appears the edge of Comus Wood: what a suggestive name! reminding us, if names mean aught, of the benighted lady, and the "harmless villager" saying to her—

> "I know each lane, and every alley green,
> Dingle, or bushy dell of this wild wood,
> And every bosky bourn from side to side,
> My daily walks and ancient neighbourhood."

Mary Knowl, as the natives call it, is a crest of the limestone masses which advance boldly upon Herefordshire, and are described as "the Ludlow promontory." In some places the limestone rests on a slippery stratum—a species of fuller's-earth—and the region hereabouts may be explored for phenomena of landslips, of which Palmer's Cairn is the most remarkable example, being strangely broken with gaps and ridges, buttresses and pinnacles; and about a mile from the Knoll a wooded hill, High Vinnall, commands a wide and charming prospect. I had intended to walk thither, but preferred remaining longer on the Knoll, when I saw how the distance was obscured by haze as the day advanced.

Having returned to Whitcliff, I descended by the steep path to the upper bridge, and crossed to the walks which have been hewn and fashioned around the base of the castle rock, where you may stroll at varying elevations, in the shade of tall trees, and from beneath the ancient walls look far up the valley of the Teme. The main entrance is on the side towards the town, an arched gateway in a dilapidated tower, which gains nothing in picturesque effect by having in front of it one of those stupid trophies from Sebastopol — a Russian gun. It seems to me a mistake to have distributed those ugly things over the land; eyesores in the quiet streets of inland towns, or showing their muzzles to the sea from the public walks of our ports. I have tried to guess, but in vain, which of our national virtues the War Minister of the day, who sanctioned the distribution, sought to promote thereby. The Greeks, as I have read, used to set up wooden trophies, so that the memory of quarrels should not be too long perpetuated.

The outer ward of the castle is now a spacious grassy area, inclosed by the old gray wall, and bordered by large trees, among which are magnificent sycamores. The entrance to the inner court with its group of buildings, the tops of towers beyond, the two-arched bridge across the grass-grown moat, the masses of ivy here and there, the trailing grasses that hang from the crevices, the thick beds of nettles and tangle of weeds in out-of-the-way places, make up a picturesque scene. Here you may lounge as long as you will by payment of a penny, and enjoy the pleasure of meditation or reading, lying at your ease under a sycamore. For a fee of sixpence you may cross the bridge and enter the inner ward, where the keeper, pointing out one portion

of the ruin after another, tells his story in terms concise and intelligible, and then releases you to wander at will.

I mounted at once to the top of the keep, and thence had the whole extent of the fortress beneath my eye. Whether seen from above or below, the several buildings, retaining much of their original form, compose an impressive scene. The history of the place contributes a few pages, and not the least important, to the history of the realm. The grim old keep whereon we stand, which bears the flagstaff bravely aloft, and wears with becoming grace its mantle of ivy, reminds us of that valorous and active Roger de Montgomery by whom it was built. The eleventh century lingers at one side of the gateway, the sixteenth on the other, represented by the skeleton of the fair lodgings erected for the Lord President, Sir Henry Sydney, in Elizabeth's reign. A little farther and there is a leap back to the turbulent times that followed the death of Rufus, by a bare isolated circular structure—a Round church which Joce de Dinan built and dedicated to St. Mary Magdalen. Beyond rises the wasted range of ruin which bounds the court on the north-west, one portion whereof is said to have been the residence of the two young princes, whose untimely fate was one of the terrible crimes perpetrated within the Tower of London. In the opposite end lodged Prince Arthur; and turning to look behind the trees of the outer ward, we see the prison of a mighty baron whose name is still perpetuated by Mortimer's Tower.

Whether it be that the spirit of history lurks amid ruins and fascinates unseen, or that these hoary piles stand as beacons whence light streams back into the Past, may admit of question; but the fascination is powerful nevertheless; and as charms have ever been

wrought by touch, so, as your breast presses the ivy cushion that covers the old stones, will you fall into a train of musing over the bygone ages. There, in thought, we see the gathering of the restless Norman chiefs who, aided by bands of Welsh, rise against Rufus, and march to Worcester, whence Bishop Wulstan, who wields sword as well as crosier, drives them back in disgrace. We see Hugh de Montgomery succeed to the far-spreading estates of his father Roger, and soon after perish in repelling a descent of piratical Norwegians upon Anglesey. Treachery follows, and forfeiture, and a gift of the castle by Henry I. to Joce de Dinan, who having finished and strengthened the place, joins the confederacy against Stephen, and, whether he like it or not, has Gervase Paganel for defender. During the siege the young prince who had been brought from Scotland venturing too near, is seized by a grappling iron thrown from the walls, and only escapes being hauled up a prisoner by the bravery of Stephen, who, rushing forward, rescues the youthful hostage at risk of his own life. Then Joce and the Lord of Wigmore make war one upon the other, and Joce laying an ambush, captures his enemy, and shuts him up in the tower to which the captive left his name. Then we hear of strife with the de Lacys; and the Fitz Warines figure on the scene, for Fulke, son of him who won the Lady Melette, is at the age of seven entrusted to the care of Joce, for such training and exercise as become a knight. He is in his eighteenth year when one morning an armed host is seen on the heights of Whitcliff over against the castle, marshalled under the banner of Walter de Lacy and others of his adherents. Joce, with knights and men-at-arms, and a company of burgesses, crosses

the river by the ford, and laying on manfully, defeats the enemy, and puts him to rout. The de Lacy flies up the valley along the bank of the stream; Joce pursues, and has well-nigh overmastered his foe, when three knights coming to the aid of the fugitive, Joce finds himself unexpectedly in extreme peril. Then on a sudden painful shrieks are heard from a window of the castle which overlooks the scene: young Fulke hears, and rushing to the spot, sees Joce's two daughters, Sybille and Hawyse, with their mother, weeping in terror as they watch the fearful fray. He asks the cause, and is answered by the fair Hawyse with taunts of cowardice; as unworthy of his brave father, and faithless to the good knight who had trained him. Stung to the quick, Fulke runs to the hall, fits on an old helmet, seizes a big axe, mounts a cart-horse at the stables, gallops forth from the postern, and springs upon the combatants just as Joce, who had been thrown from his horse, lay on the ground at the mercy of his foes. One who stoops to capture the knight is forthwith felled by a blow of the axe, which severs his spine; another blow, and down falls another of the three with cloven skull; and by this time Joce, having regained his saddle, the conflict is soon ended, and de Lacy and his follower, Arnold de Lisle, are both made prisoners.

How the two captives escape through the connivance of Marian, a gentle damsel of the household, and how after the marriage of Fulke with the fair Hawyse, the same damsel, by her unlawful love for de Lisle, occasions the betrayal of the castle to de Lacy, and her suicidal repentance thereof, may be read in the history of Ludlow. No brief record is it that tells of battles and sieges that follow; of surrender and

restoration; of incursions by the "wilde Welshemenne;" of King John's ruthless visits; of Edmund de Mortimer's marriage with the lady Philippa Plantagenet, whereby arose the claim of the Mortimers to the crown, as exemplified in that daring Earl of March, or the Marches, whose landing-place we saw in Holderness.

Llewellyn and Glyndwr appear on the scene; the two young sons of Edward IV. set forth on their fatal journey to London on the 24th of April, 1483; Henry VII. comes frequently to visit his son, the Prince Arthur, but comes no more after that mournful April of 1502; then the Court of Marches is formed for the management of the borders, and here the Lord President resides with the Sword of State, and the sittings are held; later, Sir William Brereton holds the castle for the Parliament, and all the fittings and furniture are sold; then in 1688, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, who with other persons of note has declared against Papistry, takes possession of the castle for the Prince of Orange.

You may wander about at will; meditate in the Round church; study the chronology and variations of the architecture; survey the kitchen, descend into the dungeon, look through the grating of the well, and see graceful fringes of hart's-tongue fern. Fail not to explore the building erected by Sir Henry Sydney, who was Lord President in the reign of Elizabeth, for thereby hangs a tale.

On going out I inquired of the keeper whether he had many visitors. "Not many," he answered; "you see Ludlow's on the road to nowhere, so we don't get so many visitors as we ought; and yet 'tis the finest ruin in the country."

I returned to the tender couch under the sycamore, and lay there thinking over the tale above referred to —Milton and Comus. In one of the rooms built by Sir Henry Sydney the masque was doubtless enacted; and it will heighten your enjoyment to read the poem on the spot, and under the rustling leaves. Wonderful, is it not, how the poet's imagination transmutes simple incidents into immortal verse? The Lord President, in 1634, was John Earl of Bridgewater; his sons, Lord Brackley and Mr. Thomas Egerton, and his daughter, the Lady Alice, happened to be benighted in Haywood forest, Herefordshire; and this sufficed the song-smith for his glorious purpose. It is worth mentioning of the Lady Alice that she became the wife of the Earl of Carbery who, at Golden Grove, Caermarthenshire, gave asylum to Jeremy Taylor.

The grass grows, the trees flourish, the thick-stemmed ivy creeps and penetrates, and hangs evergreen upon the walls, which are perishing little by little: an emblem of the fame wherein noble deeds survive long after the doers have commingled with their native dust. In what the ruin reveals, and the poet writes, there is alike a lesson for us.

> "Peace, brother; be not over-exquisite
> To cast the fashion of uncertain evils:
> For grant they be so, while they rest unknown,
> What need a man forestall his date of grief,
> And run to meet what he would most avoid?
> Or if they be but false alarms of fear,
> How bitter is such self-delusion!"

The contrast was great between the quiet of the castle and the noisy market-place, where, when I came forth, business was at high tide. What numbers of rustics were crowding hither and thither, clad in fustian and wearing a black hat with hemispherical

crown and broad brim, followed by smock-frocked boys. How they grinned at the staring placards of an itinerant circus, in which Ludlow was spelt with only one l; and how strange their talk sounded to unaccustomed ears. "Did ye ha' the starm isterd'y?"—"How bin ya?"—"Don't ya meddle wi' them there ducks."—"Well, I beant a gween to."—"Be you a gween hoam a'ter markut?"—"I think I shan."—"Na, I binna." Prominent among the commodities offered for sale were yeast and poultry—and great was the chaffering for 'barm and birds.' It was pitiable to see squadrons of ducks, with legs bound, sitting on the hot stones, and cocks and hens crammed into coops, all gasping incessantly with the heat, for the thermometer marked 90°.

"Moine bangs yourn," said one red-cheeked woman to her neighbour at the next stand.

"Ah, but moine 'll be sold fust," was the answer in the somewhat shrill tone which seems to be a characteristic of the women here, as it is of the sex in Wales.

Here and there by the side of their mothers stood little girls in twos and threes, looking wonderingly on at the busy and talkative throng, and seeming proud and happy in their Sunday clothes. The youngest had on a nice clean 'brat:' a thrifty mother's shield for the best frock. Brat means pinafore. You may hear the word in Lancashire as well as Shropshire.

A few paces northwards from the market-place brought me to the church, an edifice of which Ludlow may well be proud. The effect of the tall tower, the eight-sided conical-roofed porch, the buttressed walls, all of red sandstone, whereon Time has made his mark—ever significant of that which passeth away—is very striking. Not, however, without debate, does

man yield to him of the forelock, and here was an example in the labourers, masons, carpenters, glaziers, and sculptors, swarming at the work of restoration inside. If St. Lawrence ever regards terrestrial things, he ought to feel grateful to the community for the pains they take to preserve the edifice which, dedicated to him, exhibits his miracles and martyrdom, pictured in the richly-stained glass of the windows. Being a collegiate church, the interior has the combination of beauty and grandeur in form and proportions which make us admire the taste and knowledge of the early builders, and the bounteous spirit of the founders.

Notwithstanding the confusion, the scaffoldings round some of the columns, and the entire removal of the floor, the sight of the six pointed arches springing high aloft on each side of the nave, of the four mighty arches of the tower, and the handsome lantern above, was so gratifying to the eye that to tarry awhile seemed the happiest way of improving the time. When completely restored, when nave and transept, and the two chantry chapels shall reappear in appropriate style, when the curiously carved stalls shall be replaced, and light stream into the choir and chancel in rays commingled of crimson and purple and gold—then St. Lawrence's at Ludlow will rank among the most stately and beautiful of English churches.

The style is of the fourteenth and fifteenth century, presenting in some parts that which architects distinguish as late Perpendicular. That the site has been devoted to religious uses in remoter antiquity, one time as a Roman burial-place, then occupied by a little Christian church, is known to students of archaeology. The churchyard, being the highest

ground in the town, commands a wide prospect, is ornamented by an avenue of trees, and by a picturesque old house on the eastern side. The view from the top of the tower—a height of one hundred and thirty feet—is a glorious finish to a survey of the edifice, constraining you to acknowledge the supremacy of Nature in her infinite diversity and wide expanse, which has ever the overarching sky for limit.

I recrossed the market-place, passed through the gateway of the house that bestrides Broad Street, and went down to Ludford, the little village beyond the bridge, to look at its pretty privileges, as an American would call them, of wooded slopes, ivied walls, a little church, and pleasant habitations. A saunter here is a good preparation for the ascent of Whitcliff.

Then—to the railway-station, where I was joined by Temperans, who had a wish to try whether a week's walk in July would prove as agreeable as the autumn ramble during which we climbed to the top of Titterstone. The train made its brief halt, and then away we went, overcrowded by market-folk, and so not quite so quickly as Drayton's muse, who—

> "Thence wafted with a merry gale
> Saw Lemster, and the Golden Vale."

CHAPTER XI.

An Invitation to Leominster—A Comfortable Environment—Triticum Compositum—Prize Cattle—The Origin of Whitefaces—A Lady's Fine—Lemster Bread and Weobley Ale—The First Place as was Ever Made—Woolly Excellence—Blazing Hot—The Butter Cross—Abel the Architect—A Happy Restoration—The Forbury—The Church—A Touch of Byzantine—The Ducking-Stool—The Chalice—The Effigy with the Hatchet—Fertility—Herefordshire Weeds—Cider and Ciderkin—Battlefield of Mortimer's Cross—Aymestry—Fossil Road-stuff—Wigmore—Rustic Life in Rural Landscapes—Quaint Old Church—The Castle—A Bosky Ruin—The House of Mortimer—Honours and the Hangman—Croft Ambury—The Golden Vale—The Land the Silures Fought for—A Rapid Return.

THE happiest Quaker in Herefordshire once sent me so hearty an invitation to visit him at Leominster, promising such a variety of pleasant excursions, and long fatiguing walks, as made me desire to fly thither on the instant to share his hospitality, and test his capability in shoe-leather. Not till now did opportunity prove favourable, when, being within twenty miles of the inviter, I journeyed down with Temperans into the fertile champaign of the whitefaces.

As we saw, during an evening walk in a somewhat hazy atmosphere, Lemster—for so is the name pronounced—has a comfortable environment; broad pastures, gentle field-slopes crowned with wood, from the top of which you can survey leagues of goodly landscape. On one of these slopes a large plot of

Syrian wheat—*Triticum compositum*—of ample bearded ears, charged a hundred-fold with grain, rising above the dark green maze of blade and stalk, afforded us a pretty sight; and we availed ourselves of the permission notified on a label by the fence, to pluck specimens. I have sent mine, together with a few more ears gathered when fully ripe, for experiment in the hot, dry climate of Australia.

The charm of the neighbourhood for men whose "talk is of bullocks," is its well-earned reputation for prize-cattle. Hence have gone forth on their own legs or on wheels the champions of many a field, 'Sir Colin' among the latest, wherein bone and horn, and shape, and the juiciest of meat, lean nicely marbled with fat, were the claims to victory. "I have won half-a-dozen prizes," said a grazier, with whom I had a chat at the railway-station; "and now I'm going to Warwick to win another." About the time that George III. was crowned there happened a change in the then prevalent reddish-brown colour: a herdsman came to his master with news of the birth of a white-faced bull-calf; and the incident was so surprising that the animal was kept and reared to fulfil the duty of what graziers call a sire; which, by the way, is one of the styles of an emperor. Since then Reddish-brown has given way to Whiteface, and the latter has become a characteristic of the county: wherever we crossed a pasture, whitefaces looked up for a moment from their cool supper while we passed. Is this patch of white an outcrop—to use a geological term—of the ancient breed, which was like those we saw in Chillingham Park? Herefordshire was within the territory of the Britons: and one of our old chroniclers relates that a certain lady of Wales, Maud de Brehos, was made to

pay a fine to King John of one Brecknock bull and four hundred cows, all white with red ears.

Long too has the neighbourhood been famous for wool and wheat, wherein we see a reason for one half of the local proverb; "Lemster bread and Weobley ale." A countryman with whom I once fell in on my walk from Kington to Hereford urged me to go through Weobley, for "'twas such a cur'ous little place; the very middle o' the world. For his part, he al'ays thought it the fust place as was ever made." Concerning the wool, let us hear our fond topographical bard, whose muse, following the course of the Lugg, which "little Oney first, then Arro in doth take," comes

> "To Lemster for her wool, whose staple doth excel,
> And seems to overmatch the golden Phrygian fell;
> Had this our Colchos been unto the ancients known,
> When honour was herself and in her glory shown,
> He then that did command the infantry of Greece,
> Had only to our isle adventur'd for this fleece.
> Where lives the man so dull, on Britain's farthest shore,
> To whom did never sound the name of Lemster ore?
> That with the silkworm's web for smallness doth compare:
> Wherein the winder shows his workmanship so rare
> As doth the fleece excel, and mocks her looser clew;
> As neatly bottom'd up as nature forth it drew;
> Of each in high'st account, and reckon'd here as fine,
> As there th' Apulian fleece, or dainty Tarentine."

The term ore to signify wool, is found in old descriptions of this part of the county.

The unpromising evening was followed by such a blazing bright morning as harmonised with the temperature of 92°. How Temperans and I enjoyed a feast of fruit in the garden before the dew was dry! Then we looked at the town, noting here and there a few mediæval touches, surviving the modern inroads upon

narrowness and inconvenience. The old town-hall, or Butter Cross, as the folk called it, standing upon its oaken pillars in a position singularly unsuitable to present requirements, had become a nuisance; but how destroy so picturesque a relic of the handiwork of venerable John Abel, the native architect, who besides this built the market-hall at Hereford, Kington and Brecknock, who wrote his own epitaph, and was buried at the age of ninety-seven, as may be read in the little churchyard of Sarnsfield?

> His line and rule, so death concludes, are locked up in store;
> Build they who list, or they who wist, for he can build no more.

Leominster came to a praiseworthy solution of the question, and removed the edifice to its public pleasure-ground—the Forbury; and there it now stands, surrounded by shrubs and flowers, visible from all parts of the broad greensward. All its timbers, and carvings, and inscriptions are now restored, and being fitted and occupied as a private house, it will be well taken care of for many a year to come.

The only other place that I know of in England which has a Forbury, is Reading, where the ruins of the abbey stand on the verge of the place so named. In the reign of Henry I. the monastic privileges of Leominster were annexed to Reading, and the Berkshire monks established a cell here, in their dependency on the Lugg, which may perhaps account for the identification of a Forbury with each of the towns. Tradition says that the monks of Leominster had among their relics the skull of King Merewald, who founded a nunnery here, which in after times was plundered by the Danes: and we read that Sweyn, son of Earl Godwin, carried off Algiva, the abbess, and

kept her as long as he list: but punishment for his criminal outrage overtook him at last.

The parish-church also looks forth upon the Forbury, standing on the old religious ground. The modern portion, used for worship, exhibits nothing particularly remarkable, except the organ at the east end, and an altar-piece which has been ascribed to Rubens—by those who could not tell Vandaub from grand old Peter Paul; but adjoining thereto is an aisle which, with the lower portion of the tower, is of great antiquity, and Byzantine style. Ornamental painting, scroll and chequer-work, had been discovered under the whitewash of the aisle shortly before our visit, and a few patches were laid bare by scraping, for exploration. The doorway in the tower, sprinkled with the ball-flower, is a feast for the eye, of the style of art which characterises the Sclavonic race as Gothic does the Celt and Teuton. But raise your eye above the large foliated window over it, and you see sudden degeneracy, alteration of style, and poor masonry.

We saw two relics: the ducking-stool standing with wheels and plunger complete, and all in good serviceable condition, in the ancient aisle; and the silver-gilt chalice, which in the monkish ages was uplifted many a time before the crucifix. Among the thoughts that came crowding into my mind at sight of one and the other, was that many a man now-a-days is made to suffer six months' imprisonment, only because the ducking-stool has fallen into disuse for the correction of termagants.

The cup is an interesting specimen of ancient workmanship; but beyond a surmise that it once belonged to the Priory of Leominster, nothing is known of its early history. Probably the commissioners who went

round in the reign of Edward VI. to take account of church-plate and jewelry, made over the chalice to the parish-church for use in celebration of the Communion Service, seeing that the symbol of the crucifix has been cut out of one side of the foot, and replaced by the monogram I. H. C. During mass the cup was always held so that the crucifix should face the priest, hence the Popish emblem had to be taken away to fit the sacred vessel for Protestant worship. The workmanship presents us with a pleasing example of tracery and panelling, wherein may be discovered traces of blue enamel: each of the six sides of the foot bears an engraved monogram, I · H · C · or X · P · C ; and round the bowl appears the legend, in old church text, **Calicem salutaris accipiam, et nomen Domini invocabo.**

As Temperans and I had but one day available for Leominster, our happy friend took measures accordingly, and the morning was still young when we were driving forth of the town on a north-westerly route. The pony was stopped for a minute in front of a row of old-fashioned alms-houses while we read an inscription over the door; which is supposed to be spoken by the effigy of a man standing open-mouthed and bearing an axe:—

> He that gives away all before he is Dead
> Let 'em take this Hatchet and knock him on ye Head.

Then, away went the pony across the fertile country which we had seen from the slopes the evening before. The husbandman was plying his sickle among the grain, and what with orchards and hop-gardens, and undulating meadows, and the abounding life streaming into everything with the glowing light, it seemed as if Plenty ought to come from his lurking-place with lively

step and laughing eye to greet the Reaper. There is no lack of wood or of "Herefordshire weeds," as oaks are called; so you must be a churl if you cannot agree with the proverbial saying "Blessed is the eye, between Severn and Wye." East Anglia cannot show more purely agricultural scenery; and let ethnologists say what they will concerning the people, we take comfort in the oak as a characteristic of English character. "Herefordshire, shield and spear," says the old adage.

A wayfarer hereabouts may quench his thirst in cider, and have much talk with the cottagers about apples. They all have a story of wonderfully productive years which never happen now; and believe that apples die out after two hundred years, and would come to an end, were no pains taken to establish new sorts. Nothing like the ground of a hop-garden, say the cultivators, for a flourishing orchard. Cider here is an institution; your Herefordshire farmer believes that "a harvest without a seed-time," such as comes to him in his orchards, is a special advantage. No matter how rough, if the liquor will but keep from season to season. The quality at which he smacks his lips is something to wonder at. A rough flavour is not unacceptable to my palate; but the roughness of some cider gives me a horrible shudder. And yet mowers drink five or six quarts a day with relish; and in harvest time—"Why then you see, sir, they drinks a dozen quarts, or jest as much as they 'ull."

Come this way in autumn and you will see the 'polting lugs'—long slender poles with which apples are beaten off the trees—wielded by active arms, while the fruit falls in heavy showers, and all the population are busy with cider-making. You may witness the process if you will, and see the juice run from the press, and

the effects of pressure upon apples in the thick cakes of 'pommey' that come from under the screw. Thrifty folk throw this pommey into water, and thereby produce 'ciderkin,'—a weak kind of tipple which belongs to the category of must-go-down.

The quality of the apples may be judged of by their endurance of flogging. Their substance is as hard as their flavour is woody and sour. Such the cider-maker loves. Sometimes the trees produce more than are wanted for home-consumption, and wagon-loads are sent away to the smoky regions. Leominster chuckles and looks knowing when the heavily laden wains pass through to the railway-station, seeing therein a sign of Birmingham's instinctive fondness for hardware.

Pony, not desultory as we are, has brought us a few miles up this fertile vale of Lugg: Kingsland is left behind, and coming to a fork in the road, we see the 'peddystone,' as the rustics call the inscribed pedestal which there commemorates the battle of Mortimer's Cross. The ground is very level hereabouts, and for some distance to the west of the fork, rusty scraps of iron, broken bits of spurs, and other relics are still turned up from time to time by the plough in the fields on each side of the road, and mark the place of battle. The inscription records the names of the rival commanders, and tells that Owen Tudor, great-grandfather of Henry VIII., was here taken prisoner. Here, on a February morning four hundred years ago, the partisans of the Roses saw three suns in the sky, and drew such augury therefrom as their hopes or fears inspired: when spoke the ambitious White Rose,—

> "'Tis wondrous strange, the like yet never heard of.
> I think it cites us, brother, to the field;

That we, the sons of brave Plantagenet,
Each one already blazing by our meeds,
Should, notwithstanding, join our lights together,
And overshine the earth, as this the world."

To whom later in the day the King-maker is made to say—

"No longer earl of March, but duke of York;
The next degree is England's royal throne:
For king of England shalt thou be proclaim'd
In every borough as we pass along."

Then we enter Aymestry, a pleasant village whose name has become a distinctive term in geological science, because of the remarkable limestone formation upon which it is situate. In its famous quarries the *Pentamerus* abound, a treat to collectors; or you may pick up the fossil, with perhaps a *Lingula* or *Bellerophon*, from among the broken lumps of stone wherewith the road is mended. Then, at about nine miles from Leominster, pony is stabled while we walk up a by-road to Wigmore. The scenery becomes more and more rural at every step, and the life of the few rustics seems to correspond to the quiet growth that surrounds them. Presently we come to the church, and seeing how lavishly its aged walls are clad with ivy, how in form and aspect it harmonises completely with the landscape, we enjoy a pleasure beyond expectation. A cottager lends us the key, a queer old thing that unlocks the door apparently only by a happy combination of accidents, and we mount the steep narrow stair, our shoulders rubbing each side at once, to the top of the tower. The view, bounded by hills where fields alternate with foliage, is delightfully sequestered. There, amid the trees on a higher hill opposite, appear the ruins of Wigmore Castle, between which and the church are grouped a few rustic cots, some still covered

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with hoary thatch. We see the rough white road glaring in the sun, as it passes the little dwellings, and mounts the steep beyond, and everything looks so primitive, as if here change had but little influence, that we almost fancy the road and paths and cottages the same as they were when word came to Henry IV. of—

> "A post from Wales, loaden with heavy news;
> Whose worst was,—that the noble Mortimer,
> Leading the men of Herefordshire to fight
> Against the irregular and wild Glendower,
> Was by the rude hands of that Welshman taken,
> And a thousand of his people butchered."

The peal of six bells still hanging in the tower denote an importance which has long passed away. Corresponding signs are observable in the church below: the font stands under an arched recess; a portion of a carved screen remains, and in some of the pews are carvings which look like fragments of the same; the wooden roof is semicircular; four windows have stained glass, and in the place of the altar rests, as we may easily believe from its appearance, the "goodly table" which the Reformation substituted for the altar of the mass; and an old book—Charnock's *Discourse of Divine Providence*—lies open for perusal on a desk. It is a place of contrasts, where irregular make-shift pews, and an air of neglect, render architectural features the more significant.

We go up to the castle, crossing what appear to be two lines of moat on the slope, to an arched gateway, and climb the steep knoll within. The whole place is thickly sprinkled with trees, bushes, and scrub, and except the gateway there is but little left for ivy to creep over, or wherewith the visitor may restore in imagination the former aspect. We scramble round the foot

of the dilapidated tower that crowns the knoll, charmed alike by the seclusion and the sylvan prospect. Much more than Ludlow is Wigmore on the road to nowhere, and its visitors are very few. Hence the greater charm for those who do seek it. The attractions of the neighbourhood have art and history on their side as well as Nature. Leintwardine is within an hour's walk; on the way thither lies Brandon camp, Bravinium, touched by Watling Street, where Ostorius entrenched his battalions; the Abbey Grange, a fine old barn, is about a mile distant; of the abbey itself, founded in the twelfth century, no trace remains: yet there the Mortimers were entombed. We find great names associated therewith: Hugh de Mortimer laying the first stone, Brian de Brampton the second, and John son of Brian the third. This John had a sister, whose name, Margery de Burmingeham, is worth a passing notice, from its identity with that of the great hardware town.

Antiquaries, searching into the Past, tell us that a castle stood here before the time of Edward the Elder: that the Earl of Shrewsbury, Edric the Forester—Sylviaticus, as the monkish writers call him—once possessed it: that Wigmore was one of the most ancient Honours in England, and was given, after the Conquest, to the Mortimers. Ralph de Mortimer was one of those who leagued against Rufus; one of his successors had the undesirable privilege, as we have seen, of naming a prison-tower at Ludlow; another took part in King John's cruel ravage of the Marches; another, Roger de Mortimer, was an accomplice with a Fitz Warine in drowning in the Dee the two sons of Llewelyn ap Grufydd, the last native prince of Wales, in the year before the final subjugation of the Princi-

pality by Edward I. The grandson and namesake of this treacherous Roger, married Joan de Geneville, and thereby became possessed of the castle of Ludlow; he was the first Earl of March, and it is to his chivalrous proceeding thereupon that the rhymer refers, where he makes a later Mortimer say:—

> "My grandsire was the first, since Arthur's reign,
> That the Round Table rectify'd again."

But over-elated by having the conduct of Edward III. and the queen in their progress into the Marches, he provoked the enmity of his rivals, as the rhymer tells in homely verse:—

> "Queen Mother and proude Mortimer
> Familiar more than should,
> Did and undid more than they might,
> Not lesse than as they would;
>
> Till Edward, better counselled,
> Hung Mortimer, the death
> Of many a peere, who Earl of March
> And haughtie for his birth,
>
> Was lord of nine-skore dubbed knights,
> His other traynes except,
> For greater pompe than did his prince
> The Lord of Wigmore kept."

So runs the history of the great house: now highest honours, now the gibbet; now Lord-lieutenancy of Ireland, or a mission to a foreign court, now the block; now marriage with the Lady Philippa Plantagenet, daughter of Lionel Duke of Clarence, thereby opening the way to royal station, and at length appears the ambitious Duke to tread the way and mount the throne. Ambition notwithstanding, there was, as we are led to believe, a charm in the name of Mortimer for the common people: did not Jack Cade after

dubbing himself knight, declare "it shall be treason for any that calls me other than lord Mortimer?"

On repassing the church I measured the ivy-stem which flattens itself against the wall full four feet in breadth. Then having driven a couple of miles on the return route, we alighted and made for a hill that rises boldly about half an hour's walk to the north, while the groom was sent on to wait at the end of a lane. It was a stiff climb, but not without recompense. When near the summit, looking back on the broad slopes of fern we were struck by their extraordinary appearance, for they seemed as if transmuted into metal of a peculiar green colour under the sunlight then slanting down upon them. A little farther and we passed under noble timber trees to the steep slope of an entrenchment, within which rose another bank, then another, then a spacious oval area, and we were on the top of Croft Ambury, one of the chain of British camps which stretches across the country from the Malverns to the fortified height on the brink of the Teme. The view is delightful. No wonder that the Silures fought desperately for their goodly territory. The whole landscape seemed in a glow, a Golden Vale in reality as well as name; we could see Leintwardine, Brampton Brian (which the rustics call Bron), Wigmore, Lenthall Earl, on the west, and in the opposite quarter Leominster, and the Abberley and Malvern hills, and far away on every side; and but for the distant haze, we should have seen the high summits of Brecon, Radnor, and Montgomeryshire, and the hills of Clee in the north-east. Happy they who mount to the camp in a clear bright day of autumn.

Then down we plunged into the forest, through brake and thicket, toiling and crashing through ferns that

swept our shoulders, striding down steep grassy glades under leafy shadow to a park where stately trees and acres of sward made our descent pleasurable to the appointed rendezvous.

As if the pony knew that time pressed, he trotted away at a speed which Crimea of Wrottesley might have envied, and brought us to Leominster in time for the culmination of its hospitality.

CHAPTER XII.

An Evening Walk—Titterstone Clee and Brown Clee—Geological Structure—Clee from Clay—The Giant's Chair—Vestiges of the Druids—An Autumnal Prospect—Purple for Bronze—Hills and Haze—Cleobury Mortimer—Piers Plowman—Entrenchments—Abdon Barf—Heath Chapel—The Eastern View—Burwarton—Dwelling-place and Burial-place—Nec timeo nec sperno—Hills and Dales—Cleobury North—A Sportsman's Epitaph—Neenton—An Etymology—Reminiscence of Godiva—Bluffs of the Severn—Bridgenorth—Town-hall and Market-hall—The Terrace—Admirable Prospect—Castle Walk and Castle Ruin—Cromwell's Escape—Resort and Refuge of Kings—Henry the Fourth's Rendezvous—Ethelfleda and Ethelward—Morfe—Quat—The Monk's Dream—The Lady's Vow—The Lord's Performance—Billingsley—Bewdley—Wykeham's Prebendary—Bishop Percy's Birth-place—A Picnic to Apley—The Free River—Delightful View—Sabrina Fair—Mirth and Moonlight.

THREE hours later Temperans and I, having returned to Ludlow, were walking up the road that with varying slope crosses the elevated ground wherein the two Clees bury their flanks, on the way to Bridgenorth. Once clear of the town we had the two summits in the prospect before us, Titterstone 1730 feet high, in pleasing contrast to massive broad-shouldered Brown Clee, who though seventy-six feet higher, appears less tall than his graceful brother. They are the highest points in the range which, as may be seen on looking eastwards from Ludlow, has a southerly prolongation in the ridge named Hoar Edge; and the range, apart from its hilly character, is remarkable for its mineral

structure. It contains the most elevated coal-field in the kingdom: the neck and breast, if we may so speak, of Titterstone are a mass of coal resting upon strata of millstone-grit, limestone, and old red, and all are pierced by an eruptive stream of basalt which, having spread while in a molten state, around the vent, now forms the crest of the cone. A ridge of basalt underlies Hoar Edge, and copious injections of the same rock are met with by the miners in Brown Clee. The latter hill, moreover, abounds with excellent ironstone; and some day, when means of transport are easier than at present, workings will be commenced on a large scale and find resources for centuries to come.

Grandly rose the cone of Titterstone before us, all lustrous with rays of the setting sun, as we paced slowly onwards. We had walked the same road, but in the reverse direction, in a former autumn, and so were ready with reminiscences to heighten the actual pleasure. Never since our boyhood had we had such a feast of blackberries as on that gusty day when we scrambled through hedges and ditches, the shortest way to the open breast of the hill, and thence trudged laboriously to the summit. Clee is a modification of the old Saxon word for clay, and is well applied here as we discovered in damp hollows of the lower slopes; but on the open height the turf is dry and elastic, and patched with bracken.

The basaltic crest is topped by a cairn: the basalt is riven and shattered, and falls down the western side of the cone in a precipitous scree, but of huge lumps such as the early Etruscan builders would have sought. Scrambling down the scree is well repaid by sight of the clustering ferns that grow in the crevices. The ponderous masses on its brow form what has long been

known in the neighbourhood as the Giant's Chair; among them tradition tells of a rocking-stone, and other vestiges of the Druids, and from totter-stone the hill is said to derive its present name.

Glorious was the prospect that we gazed over while sitting in a hollow of the crags sheltered from the chilling blast: russet tints were creeping upon the broad green slopes of Corve Dale; the Caradoc range, and the hills to the west had begun to change their purple for a vesture of bronze which, darkening the distant summits against the infinite blue, produced the appearance of a storm-tossed horizon. Ludlow seemed as if in a deep basin about five miles distant, and lay flanked and backed by woods, whereon appeared the first beautifying touches of the brumal finger, while villages nestling here and there amid grove and copse, and cottages showing their old gray walls to the sun, and farm on farm stretching as a girdle round the hill and far as eye could see, all seemed wrapt in the soft repose that follows harvest.

Southwards the view extends across the fields and orchards of Worcestershire to the Abberley and Malvern hills; eastwards appear the Clents and beyond them the dark haze of the Black Country; and in the middle prospect there lies the quiet little town of Cleobury Mortimer, noticeable for the allusion to clay in its first syllable, and as having once been a seat of the Mortimers, whose Honour comprehended the country at the foot of Clee: noticeable too, as the birthplace of the author of Piers Plowman, who was one of the Reformers before the Reformation.

On the summit, eastwards of the Giant's Chair the remains of ancient stone walls inclosing a circular space are discernible; but except that they are very,

very old, no satisfactory explanation thereof has been arrived at. An earthen entrenchment—Abdon Barf—is still to be seen on Brown Clee, the highest summit in Shropshire. And on the slope of its base, within an hour's walk of the road, stands Heath Chapel: a curious little relic of the olden time. And with all this there are beautiful touches of landscape. Brown Clee is rough with wood, particularly on its eastern side; while Titterstone, though bare aloft, thrusts his feet into sylvan scenery through which runs one of the prettiest of lanes, the shortest way to Ludlow.

So, with reminiscences inspiring our talk, we paced up the ascent which continues for three or four miles, the road winding hither and thither between fields and hedgerows. We met parties of rustics going home from work, who accosted us with a friendly "good-noight" as they passed. Longer and longer grew our shadows, till the light faded from the hot dry highway; and then the honeysuckle began to give forth its fragrance to the cooling air, and there was a gentle stir in the hedges as of things enlivened by decline of the heat. Then the view opened to the eastward; and signs of approach to the smoky region appeared in the two enormous wagon loads of charcoal creeping up the hill on the way to smelting-works near the Severn. Then the road began to fall in the opposite direction, and when it was too dark to read the sign, we came to the *Boyne Arms*, a roadside inn at Burwarton, and there passed the night.

While taking an early saunter in our slippers on the morrow we saw about half a dozen houses, and acres of trees under which the road has a pleasant descent. Church and churchyard are nicely kept: a few old carved stones are set in the new work above the

entrance, and old oak carvings are preserved on the front of the gallery. Here is the burial-place of the Boynes: their dwelling-place is on the opposite side of the road;—an agreeable residence situate in pretty grounds, at which we ventured to take a peep. The family motto appears on the sign of the inn—*Nec timeo nec sperno.*

A repetition of "hilly and daly" well describes the road between Burwarton and Bridgenorth, with trees enough here and there for shadow, and everywhere great slopes of fields. At the foot of the long declivity we came to Cleobury North—again an allusion to clay, you will find it in a score of places around the hills,—a little village, with a primitive-looking church, the tower of which, rude, square, and conical roofed, peculiar to Shropshire, reminds us of the vignettes in the story-books written by Mrs. Sherwood for children of a former generation. One of the tombstones bears a somewhat primitive epitaph:—

> How oft; have I my Brother Sportsmen rang'd
> The stubble fields, the Covers, & the Plains:
> My dogs and Gun, for sixty years and more,
> Companions of my toil, and pleasures bore,
> All winds & weather & oft in dead of night,
> I've serv'd the best of masters Thomas Knight;
> Infirmities at length my struggling will o'ercome
> Nature bid adieu, Gods Blessed will be done.

Neenton, in the next hollow, is still more primitive of aspect, not to say shabby. The cottages are rude as those of a Highland village, and because that the doors fit badly, the doorposts are muffled in haybands to keep out the wind. The bridge having been widened is a curiosity, one half antiquity, the other modern utility. The name is antique: we have here a little brook, and *Neen* signifies stream. Even trifles

help to beguile the way, and thinking of etymologies is better than growling at dust. A mile farther, and though Chetton is not in sight from the road, we may remember while passing, that Godiva, who "took the tax away," founded a church in the village, which formed part of her domain.

Every step brings us nearer to the Severn, but there is no gentle descent into a broad vale animated by a view of the river; our approach is across elevated ground terminating in one of those bold bluffs which, advancing here and there upon the stream, with crag and cliff, terraced precipices, hanging woods, and inclines of tangled scrub, add so greatly to the beauty of its course through southern Shropshire. By-and-by we enter the broad High Street of Bridgenorth, which once had 'rows,' as at Chester: on the left rises the weather-worn tower of St. Leonard's; native sandstone made picturesque by age and signs of coming decay. In that church Richard Baxter began his ministry: in the churchyard Roundhead and Royalist had a sharp fight, fatal to them who held for the king. A little farther, and in the middle of the street, there stands the town-hall, displaying its chequered gables and architectural devices from the middle of the seventeenth century. A little farther, and the middle of the nineteenth century shows a specimen of its handiwork in a handsome market-hall of coloured brick; then taking one of the narrow ways wherein the broad thoroughfare loses itself, a few paces bring us to the edge of the bluff, and to a prospect which, coming upon it suddenly, few can behold without a cry of admiration. We look down into a long curving reach of the vale of Severn, and across to slopes on the eastern bank that rise far away to yet higher elevations: northwards

High Rock uprears its perpendicular mass, bedecked with verdure, backed by the woods of Apley, and where "Nature hath made a terrible dike," as Leland says, three hundred feet beneath us, flows the river, bearing a tier of barges along its margin, streaming through the arches of the bridge, encircling the islands, and winding onwards between meadows and gardens to gladden the vales of Worcester and Gloucester, and salute the western sea on the shores of Somerset.

We are on the Castle Walk, a railed terrace, hewn along the forehead of the bluff. Behind us the ground rises to the summit, where above the pleasant houses and garden slopes, appears the huge fragment of that once famous stronghold, Bridgenorth castle. There it leans in hopeless decrepitude as left by the Roundhead sappers and miners after the siege in 1645, during which Lieutenant-General Cromwell, "making some stand to speak with his officers that were with him, a brace of musquet bulletts, shot from the enemies works, hit a Cornet of his regiment with whom the Lieutenant-General was then talking. Blessed be God," continues the narrator, "the person aimed at escaped without any hurt."

From 1102, when Robert de Belesme built the castle with almost incredible rapidity, to strengthen his opposition to Henry I., only to see it speedily captured by the king, Bridgenorth was a royal fortress, until Charles I. gave it to one of the gentlemen of his bed-chamber. The kings who marched this way to the conquest of Wales, made it their resting-place: here the swift arrow flying to the heart of Henry II. was intercepted by the breast of a faithful knight; here lodged Thomas à Becket; here came John with his superstitious relics; here returned young

Edward victorious from the field of Evesham; here the second Edward sought refuge from the pursuit which ended so fearfully for the monarch at Berkeley; here was the rendezvous ordered by Henry IV.—

> "The earl of Westmoreland set forth to day;
> With him my son, lord John of Lancaster;
> On Wednesday next, Harry, thou shalt set forward;
> On Thursday, we ourselves will march:
> Our meeting is in Bridgenorth: and, Harry, you
> Shall march through Glostershire; by which account,
> Our business valued, some twelve days hence
> Our general forces at Bridgenorth shall meet."

And hither in a succeeding century came the first Charles Stuart, when the ominous clouds were gathering about him. The townsfolk still repeat his saying, that this Castle Walk was the finest walk in his kingdom.

There are reminiscences of yet earlier days: of the lady Ethelfleda, and the castle she built on the eminence now known as Pam-pudding hill; of Ethelward, king Athelstan's brother, who dwelt in a hermitage in the forest of Morfe, which once covered that fair region outspread before us: a cave in the sandstone cliff by the side of the road as you go hence to Wolverhampton, remains to show where it was that the royal hermit found a retreat. Old camps may be seen in the neighbourhood: Quatford, down the river, was for a winter the refuge of the Danes, whom Alfred circumvented on the river Lea; the marauders crossed the island to the great forest on the bank of the Severn, hoping to build ships, and escape down the river. Quat is said to be the Saxon form of the ancient British word Coed—forest; and probably because good hunting was there to be had, Roger de Montgomery liked it best of all his manors, and built a castle thereon, and a church. The ship in which

the Lady Adeliza, his second wife, was crossing the sea from Normandy, being caught in a fearful storm, and in peril of wreck, it was revealed to a monk in a dream, that her promise to build a church to St. Mary Magdalene on the spot where she should first meet her husband would avert the danger. He told his dream; the promise and vow were given, and Quatford church stands on the hilltop where the meeting took place, still retaining some portions of Earl Roger's walls, and near to a few gnarly oaks which you might fancy old enough to have witnessed the consecration of the original edifice. Below Quat the Severn flows past Billingsley, where Harold had an interview with Griffin, Prince of Wales, and Algar the rebel; then having watered the slopes of the forest of Wyre, it quits Shropshire for Worcestershire at Bewdley, which our old antiquary describes as "a town sett on the syde of an hill, so comely, a man cannot wish to see a towne better."

Earl Robert's transference of his seat from Quat to Bridgenorth, led to the building of a second church to St. Mary Magdalene; and now it stands a feature in the singularly picturesque view of the town which delights the traveller's eye as he reaches the spot where the road from the Black Country crosses the distant brow. The church was collegiate, and interests us by having had William of Wykeham as one of its prebends. And as we look down upon the Low Town at the foot of the bluff, and scan the ancient Cartway, we remember that there stands the decaying timbered house in which Bishop Percy was born: a name dear to every one who loves the poetry of his fatherland.

Temperans has a friend at Bridgenorth, upon whom

we called, as it happened, at a propitious moment, for the greeting was accompanied by an invitation to join a picnic party then about to start on a trip up the Severn to Apley. From dusty road to rippling river was an agreeable change; the boat lay ready off the busy factory where carpets are woven by Jacquard looms; we made our way down the steep zigzag to the shore; and presently the strain was put upon the tow-rope, and we were moving up stream, a large party of matrons, men, and maidens. Then there were the pleasure of conversation, of noting the picturesque appearance of the town as it receded in the distance, of admiring High Rock as we passed under it, and the excitement of the little vicissitudes which befal travellers by water. In places the stream is shallow and runs rapidly, as over a scour, detrimental to navigation in dry seasons. But Severn is a "free river," unrestrained by locks throughout its whole course; and barge-owners and boatmen prefer freedom from tolls, to heads of water. Whatever of pleasant diversity exists on the banks is but a preparation for the charms of Apley, where a steep hill coming forward upon the left bank presents a bluff to the river which combines all the beauties of thickets and noble woods, cliffs and caves, dark-red sandstone in a setting of green, paths running on easy slopes, or mounting so abruptly that ascent or descent is a sore trial to lung and muscle, on the summit a noble terrace, and at the base a noble river.

On the terrace you may enjoy at pleasure shade or sunshine, and a view nearly all round the horizon by a traverse among the trees. Eastwards you see the Clents, and always the smoky haze beyond: with a turn the Malverns appear, then Clee, then the uplands,

—parks, woods, and fields, stretching away towards Wenlock Edge; and with another turn Wrekin completes the circle. Immediately beneath extends the river in a long gentle curve, bordered by pastures, and the smooth sward of Apley Park, the lively green of which contrasts beautifully with the dark masses of foliage and the shadows that slant from the afternoon sun. Far or near the prospect is beautiful; but your eye will perhaps most incline to linger on the vale of Severn, attracted by the long gleaming reach of water, the leagues of green slope, and the bold encroaching rocks. Perhaps you will think of her who by "a quick immortal change, was made goddess of the river;" and to complete the charm one of the maidens should sing

"Sabrina fair,
Listen where thou art sitting
Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,
In twisted braids of lilies knitting
The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair;
Listen for dear honour's sake,
Goddess of the silver lake,
Listen, and save.
Listen, and appear to us,
In name of great Oceanus."

Temperans and I having wandered away down the face of the bluff, in and out among the grand old trees, under dark-red rocks, and mazy shadows, incurred a reproof for breach of gallantry, which was administered to us on our return to the height, with an intimation that we had lost the merry pleasure of taking part in a good round game. What a supplement to sylvan thoughts! However, Bridgenorth, if too religious, as some folk complain, knows how to provide a feast, and we were not too late for the good cheer which was laid out on a platform overhung by trees a little below the summit. So the hours stole away till sunset warned

of departure, and then there were baskets to be carried, and maidens to be supported in the difficult descent to the boat, and when fairly embarked the sentiment was—who should be merriest? Then, as our journey's end drew near, the moon rose and threw silvery outlines upon the dark mass of houses in the High Town, and brightened the pale vapour creeping over the meadows, and played among the quivering leaves and along the water.

CHAPTER XIII.

A Zigzag to Corve Dale—The Tunnel—Morville—Much Wenlock—A Sleepy Town—Privilege—The Old Town-hall—Fine Old Carvings—A Wakeful Text—The dear old Mother Tongue—The Abbey Ruins—The Prior's Lodgings—Picturesque Effects—King Merewald's Daughter—A Miracle—Legend of St. Milburga—A Fresh Start—Wenlock Edge—A Happy Landscape—Hughley—Scarce Water—Lane to Cardington—The Bubbling Spring—Amid the Hills—Caradoc—Twilight—An Enchanting Spectacle—The Ascending Veil.

With our next morning's start we commenced a zigzag back into Corve Dale, desiring to cross a tract of country which we had not before seen, and to finish with a second visit to Church Stretton, and the Longmynd. We went down to look at the tunnel which, opened near the spot where Cromwell's sappers began to mine the castle, now pierces the great hill of sandstone beneath the town, and gives passage to the Severn Valley railway. Apart from the opportunity for geological study, there is something in the sight suggestive of a contrast with the relic on the summit, and we feel proud that mighty men have lived since Earl Roger.

A few miles to the north-west, and we came to Morville, a pretty village, where fruit and flowers embellish the cottages, and the smithy resounds with diligent hammer-strokes, and the inn looks hospitable,

and the church respectable, and the whole environment cheerful: a prettier place now than when Earl Roger owned it. Five miles farther, and we saw the Wrekin far off, and near at hand a spire—a rare sight in Shropshire, and descended into Sleepy Hollow, and the borough of Much Wenlock. Sleepy is the only word that describes the aspect of the town: a more somnolent habitation we never saw; Delft and Sierre are brisk in comparison. For ten minutes that we stood watching in the main street, not a soul appeared, and the one that did at length appear was only an old man, who paced slowly from one door to another, and forthwith left the street as vacant as before. It seemed almost ludicrous to us that the inhabitants should think it worth while to open their shops on any other day than market-day. Much, that is, Great Wenlock, has nevertheless a history, more important than some larger places: it was one of the few boroughs privileged to send members to parliament by special charter, the privilege in this case having been conferred by Edward IV.; and there are relics of its former greatness over which the visitor certainly will not go to sleep. We got the key of the town-hall from the woman in charge, and treated ourselves to a sight of the panelled walls and chimney-piece, all of old oak, beautifully carved, and in excellent preservation. Chairs to correspond stand around the council-table, and there is such a richness and dignity of effect about the whole as befits an apartment of the olden time, where grave burgesses sat in their robes of office to deliberate on a message from the Crown, or on the ways and means of their franchise. They knew how to render authority the more impressive by the refinements of art, and we who admire the curious workman-

ship of the dark old panels, and pilasters, and mouldings, will not be ungrateful to their memory.

On our way to a yet older relic of antiquity, we noted what seemed to us a happy instance of wakefulness implied in a handbill posted on the church door: "Note that upon the 26 daye of June was Service celebrated first in the English tonge: anno primo Elizabethae 1559," from which pregnant and inspiriting text, taken from the parish register, the Hon. and Rev. A. Legh Powys had preached a sermon on the 26th of June, 1859, the three hundredth anniversary of a glorious event. A good sermon on that topic would be worth listening to, and the more so as one's thought would be busy all the while in imagining the hearty worship, the gladsome burst of tuneful thanksgiving that arose in hundreds of parish-churches when the dear old mother tongue was first used by priest and by people for supplication and praise.

A short distance eastwards from the church stand the ruins of Wenlock Abbey, adjoined by a range of conventual buildings, both showing signs of former magnificence, and well do the silence and sleepiness harmonise therewith. The double row of narrow-pointed arches along the front of the buildings, which produce a pleasing effect as you approach, are the lights of a two-storied ambulatory, whence there is access to the chambers in the rear. We walked up and down the cloistral passages, considering the alternations of light and shadow, and prowled here and there among the empty rooms, two of which are spacious, with open-timbered roofs, till we were stopped by indications of actual residence. A pleasant dwelling they have, and a pretty garden, who now inhabit the Prior's lodgings. One year of an abbot's

revenue would suffice to put the old place into decent repair and we were glad to see signs of restoration in one part, and masons at work, who told us that Squire Gaskell had bought the property, and was laying out a little money on it.

Then, the gate being unlocked, we strolled into the abbey grounds, and lying down on a slope of green-sward, enjoyed the scene under a refreshing shade. Little is left of the once famous edifice, the wealthiest and most privileged of all the religious houses in Shropshire, but that little is very beautiful. The style is of the thirteenth century. You see the south transept, a fine tall gabled piece, which has a compressed arch among the five yet remaining, and portions of the tower arches, and a fragment of the south aisle—low, thick columns, and a few heavy groins. Beyond the transept stands a remnant of the chapter-house, exhibiting arches interlaced with a singularly pleasing effect. Grassy hummocks rising here and there mark the former extent of the building, and the flat bases of pillars show the length of the choir and the limits of the Lady Chapel. On the northern side the destruction is complete enough to satisfy an iconoclast; but Nature has provided against nudity, by tall ash-trees and poplars, which beautify the place and heighten the charm of the old architecture and masonry, while scattered thorns diversify the surface of the meadow.

Nearly twelve hundred years ago, King Merewald's daughter, Milburga, founded a nunnery here which had peace, and flourished, so great was the sanctity of the noble lady, until it was destroyed with many other excellent things by "the heathen of the Northern Sea." Some generations later, the site having been discovered

by a miracle, a new church was built. A boy running across the ground stumbled on the place where Milburga lay buried; a sweet savour issued from the tomb; the monks, overjoyed, exhumed the body, and Milburga was canonised and reinterred with pomp and ceremony, and thereafter throngs of pilgrims journeyed to her shrine. Besides the miracles, tradition tells, as in other places, of a subterranean passage which runs hence to Buildwas; but no one has ever had the fortune to discover it.

The story of one of St. Milburga's miracles has been prettily told in rhyme by a gentlewoman of Shropshire.

"The Sisters of Llan Meilien
Round the Abbess Milburg stood:
O ladye stay, go not away
Thro' yon dark lonesome wood.
The road of wolves is sore beset
And eke of Paynim foe:
Then tarry here, O ladye dear,
To Godstoke do not go.

King Merewald's daughter raised her hand
And sadly shook her head:
Ere break of day I must away
To Godestoke, she said.
For sword I'll take the Holy Cross,
My maiden truth for shield;
So armed, mine asse and I mote pass
Safe thro' a battle-field."

The night is passed in holy vigil, and ere break of day the blessed lady, after a tearful farewell, sets forth on her journey:—

"O'er hill and dale, thro' brake and fell,
Sped on the milkwhite ass,
And ere the sun had reached his noon,
Thro' Corve's fair dale they pass.
There in the deep red furrow
The sowers dropped the grain;
An armëd Pagan by their side
Looked out athwart the plain."

No sooner does he see the holy maiden, than his eye flashing fiercely the while, he accosts her rudely, taunts her that she had once been promised to him by her "faint-hearted sire," and threatens she shall rue the day when she scorned his love.

"The Maiden's heart it quailed not,
She meekly raised her eye:
Wolfgang, thine arm can never harm
One that hath friend on high:
He who can make yon grain to spring
And ripen into fruit,
Pours rain and sunshine in the heart
And bids the faith take root.

She pointed to the furrowed field;
Lo! even as she spake,
From the dry seed upsprang green blade,
And stalk and full ear brake.
In sore amaze the serfys gaze,
The warrior smote his breast,
And humbly on his bended knee
The Christian's God confest."

Reinvigorated by rest and contemplation, we faced once more the fierce sunshine, and started to walk the thirteen miles to Church Stretton. Our route from Bridgenorth had been to the north-west; now we turned south-west, taking the road that runs along the top of Wenlock Edge. At the hill-foot as you leave the town, the wayfarer is tempted by the invitation on a sign:—

Now Robin Hood is dead and gone
Walk in and drink with Little John.

Near the brow, a stone arched recess, inscribed *Havelock Well*, 1857, offers a cooler temptation, and is a gladdening proof that wayside springs are emerging from years of neglect.

In general levelness of outline Wenlock Edge

resembles the Hog's Back, between Guildford and Farnham: its position is the same as that of other hill ranges in Shropshire, as already mentioned—from north-east to south-west, and for some miles its conformation agrees with its distinctive appellation. Its mass is principally composed of the rocks which, as Wenlock limestone and Wenlock shale, have become special terms in the geology of the Silurian System. We had walked up the long ascent and on the summit level for an hour, finding nothing remarkable in limited views of fields, when unexpectedly an opening appeared on the right, from which a prospect opens to the north-west, stretching far beyond the broad vale to the hill-country of the Welsh border, where the blue summits rise paler and paler as they recede. Beneath lies the village of Hughley, looking pretty amid the fields, copses, and woods which overspread the landscape: a happy landscape, dotted with villages which were already old when the Conqueror's scribes entered their names in Domesday Book. Though of little note now, they figure prominently in the early history of the county.

At this place we can mark the edge-like character of the Edge, for its western face is more or less precipitous, and it retains this abrupt ridgy character for some miles. Our walk was now the more pleasurable from the succession of views we had on one side or the other; and the hill itself, though high, is not bare; trees and hedgerows border the road and leave a stripe of grass comfortable to the feet, and form here and there bowery nooks which invite to a rest. We should have thought the nooks more delightful had we met with even a tiny spring in one of them; but water is so scarce on the summit that the old woman at the toll-

bar could only spare a teacupful between us. "It seemed hard," she said, "to deny a drink o' water, but she had to send a mile and a half for every drop she wanted;" so we took our sip thankfully, and walked on. About three miles farther we left the highway for a lane running down on the right, which promised a shortening of our walk. It led us to Cardington, a secluded, rustic village, cottages and trees picturesquely grouped, where besides pretty sights for the eye we found a spring, bubbling copiously up so bright and clear that it was a joy to look into its overflowing basin. Quickly we dipped our india-rubber cup, and—how we quaffed!

> "Not a full blushing goblet could tempt us to leave it,
> Though filled with the nectar that Jupiter sips."

We were now nearing the hill range which had for some time bounded our prospect on looking from the Edge; steeply the rugged lane rose and fell, and at length merged into a trackway on the flanks of Sharpstones and Cardington hill. Presently we were encompassed by the huge heights, in whose shadow we found coolness, and relief for tired feet on the soft sward, and somewhat for observation in the rounded slopes, their steeps roughened and crested by rocks, their ferny hollows, and varied patches of trees.

Twilight crept on: ere we skirted his base, old Caradoc had lost the gilding from his lofty brow. Then, issuing from the defile, the track hardens into a deep lane which curves down to the valley, while a footpath mounts to the top of the bank. From this path we saw a spectacle of wondrous beauty. Before us rose the Longmynd, Stretton lying peacefully under its sheltering height, and in the deep shadow that

increased the mountainous effect of the mighty hill. The amber glow still lingering in the western sky, made the shadow appear the darker, and the form of the massive group the more distinct; and along the wavy outlines there trembled a filmy radiance, that seemed a halo hung upon the edges of the hills. Meanwhile, through the deep gulfs that separate the summits, poured broad streams of light, slanting down one beyond the other; golden where they rushed over the crest, but reddening with the descent, until falling more and more into shadow, the red deepened to purple, and the purple subsided into the dusky veil that Night began to draw softly over the landscape. The effect produced by these streams had something in it of enchantment: what marvellous manifestation was about to take place amid glories rarely vouchsafed to mortal eye? Those light-streams appear palpable: are they sent from a hitherto undiscovered empyrean? We could only wonder as instinctively we stood still to gaze: wonder and admire, with an awful admiration.

And while we stood the dusky veil floated higher and higher; the radiant film and the streaming glory vanished; ever upward floated the veil, and ere we came to the town the red and the purple were lost in the sombre shadow of the mysterious hill.

CHAPTER XIV.

Church Stretton—Unwonted Excitement—The First Gaslight—A Healthy Town—A Feeble Farewell—Up the Longmynd—Hill and Valley—Senior and Junior—Lawley, Caradoc, Ragleth, and Wrekin—Memorial of Caractacus—Watling Street—Mill Glen—Deep Gully—Oakham Dingle—Heath and Bilberry—A Breezy Summit—Glorious Panorama of Hills—An Awkward Road—View to the West—The Bilberry Gatherers—A Geological Day-dream—From Lifeless to Living—A Flight to Shrewsbury.

We found the little town in a state of excitement; groups of rustics in the street, waiting apparently for some demonstration, creating an unwonted hum of voices, and we were at a loss for an explanation until the waitress at *The Crown* told us that "the gas was a-going to be lighted for the first time. They had tried to light it the evening before, but it wouldn't light." It was something, we thought, to have arrived on so memorable an occasion, and we watched for the illumination; but instead of dazzling there was disappointment; the gas still refused to light, except at two of the lamps, in which it shone with the lustre of a halfpenny candle. The gazers shook their heads doubtfully, and went home to bed.

There was light enough when we walked out on the morrow for a stroll, for the sky was blue, and the whole valley full of sunshine. The town, which is chiefly comprised in a single street, is favourably

situate, being gladdened betimes by the morning ray. "The air," says a topographer of sixty years ago, "is remarkably healthy; the soil is a fine gravel; and there are several fine rivulets running from the hills, which produce many excellent trout." We renewed the happy impression of our former visit, and came to the conclusion that Church Stretton offers an agreeable sojourn to those who love a quiet holiday.

Though not on high ground, church and churchyard exhibit signs of that regard for the sacred precinct which we have noticed elsewhere in Shropshire, as well as sepulchral epigraphy of the usual platitudinarian character. A deceased husband rhymes to his survivors thus:—

Farewell, my wife and children dear
I could no longer tarry here
This world is frail as you may see
Therefore prepare to follow me
Farewell my children dear
Ye are in number seven
Therefore prepare you all
In hope to meet in heaven.

An American traveller who came here a few years ago, went home and printed the sixth line thus—Who live at number seven.

Prepared by our stroll, we started for a ramble on the Longmynd. The ascent begins immediately behind the town by a rough, steep road, which runs along the margin of one of those deep gulfs called 'gutters' by the natives, whence poured the streams of light that glorified the close of our yesterday's walk. The slope is so abrupt that you are soon high enough to look into the Stretton valley and across to the opposite hills, the picturesque range which includes the Lawley, nine hundred feet high, Caradoc

twelve hundred, Hope Bowdler Hill, and Ragleth, a thousand feet, while far to the north-east appears the Wrekin in form of a pale blue cone. From hillfoot to hillfoot is perhaps a quarter of a mile, yet the two sides of the valley are remarkably different: the Longmynd has a squareness of form, as if its summits had been lopped or washed off in the primeval ages, and its outer slopes, and the sides of the deep gullies are more or less precipitous. Caradoc and his compeers, on the contrary, are somewhat ridgy and angular in form, highest at their south-western extremity, whence they slope away gradually in the opposite direction. The Lawley looks bare: Caradoc, rough and rocky aloft, is clothed with wood about his waist, and from the edge of the wood down to the plain with corn-fields; Ragleth too bears grain and timber, and rocks upon its brow. It is a landscape fraught with contrasts as much for the mind as the eye: though so near together now, those hills on the east are separated from these on the west by immeasurable ages in the history of creation, and Longmynd looks across to them with the gravity of a patriarch whose years, burdened with the recollections of the earliest throes of chaos, were in number numberless when the juniors rose into existence. It is like speaking of yesterday in comparison to mention Caer Caradoc, the encampment on the summit, that perpetuates the name of Caractacus, or to point to the narrow road which rising from the valley up the side of the hill, still shows the line of Watling Street, stretching away north-east to Wroxeter, the Uriconium of the Romans.

Now, let us resume the ascent. How Mill Glen, the gully on our right, appears to deepen as we advance; we see the mill on the little stream far beneath; the

patch of wood, the foot-bridge, all seemingly buried and lost to the rest of the world. The solitariness of aspect is heightened by the vista of the gully narrowing onwards beyond the mill, and running away, as it were, to the very heart of the hill where Bodbury Ring tells mutely of ancient defence. Opposite to us the farther side opens with a lateral gully, which resembles a Devonshire coomb; and if you wish for a retreat wherein to meditate for a few hours, betake yourself thither. We had pleasurable recollections of having explored it on our former visit. Then the road turning away from the gulf sweeps across the table-land which forms a gentle slope to the summit: we get peeps into Oakham Dingle, and other hollows opening to the east, all smoothly carpeted with soft green turf, to which the few patches of gorse and bracken add a pretty variety. Then the road turns to the west, and gradually losing its worn surface of rock and gravel, disappears on a long straight slope of sward, stretching between the broad acres of heath and bilberry intermingled, which overspread the top of Longmynd at an elevation of sixteen hundred feet. This is a delightful spot, open to all the breezes, and all the sunshine; so dry and elastic that to walk on it recalls the lithe and active sensations of boyhood, and where you may run, sit, lie, or roll at pleasure. And for further enjoyment there is the glorious prospect: from Clent to Clee, from Malvern to the crowding mountain peaks of Brecon—blue peaks and ridges, which you behold with that thrill of delight ever awakened by the sight of far-distant summits. Oh! if borne through the air sublime, we could but come thither on the instant, what a feast of mountain scenery would be ours! Those peaks rising to an elevation of more than two thousand feet,

and engirdled by fearful crags and tremendous cliffs, are the highest in South Wales.

For the view to the west we must go a mile farther across the great table-land. How black the heath looks when a cloud masks the sun, and seeing the sudden change, and the appearance of solitude imparted by the lonely finger-post, we can imagine the dreariness of a gloomy winter day on these unsheltered heights. Presently there is an end to the broad pathway of sward, and the road reappears, rougher and rougher, yet not impassable, for the farmers on the west of the hill send their wagons over to Stretton market in fine weather; we met one labouring through the deep ruts. The Earl of Powis once came across in his carriage; but an angler who, driving himself down to the Principality for six weeks of fishing, tarried for the night at *The Crown*, told us after his survey of the ground that he preferred to evade the ugly-looking ascent by taking a road round the southern foot of the hill.

When the road begins to descend suddenly on the west, where the old Portway passes along the brow, then you get the view—a delightful view—of Shropshire scenery, embracing the country of our last week's walk. There are the hills of Ratlinghope, and Robin Hood's Butts; there the Stiperstones; there Corndon, and beyond, the hills upon which we looked from Montgomery: a region of brown hills and green valleys. Especially charming is the view of the sunny slopes in the broad vale towards Bishop's Castle. Who would believe that a wayfarer could ever feel weary in so lovely a landscape?

Truly, this shaggy hillslope is a pleasant resting-place. It faces the western breeze that brings new

life to our lungs: what a luxurious couch is thickly-grown heath, and how much more luxurious when, as in this instance, you can recline and pluck ripe bilberries with your lips! Troops of women, boys, and girls, who have come out from Stretton, are dispersed about the summit picking the plentiful fruit, which they say fetches a good price this year, because of the scarcity of other kinds; and Temperans, who has never before seen bilberries growing, is prowling and devouring eager and happy as a schoolboy. Let us leave him undisturbed in his happiness, estimable reader, while you and I, whose wanderings in Shropshire are nearly ended, take a quiet retrospect, which, by enlarging, will help to complete our idea of the county.

Of all the counties in the kingdom, there is none more interesting to the geologist than Shropshire, for it contains every sedimentary formation from lias to slate, and is the type by which the same geological system has been made out in other countries. Thirty years ago the Old Red Sandstone was the limit of research, and all the rocks below that were described by the convenient term graywacke: a term as convenient as electricity is now-a-days with many persons to explain phenomena which they cannot understand. In 1831 Sir Roderick Murchison came into this county and commenced a studious survey of all the strata, and thereby established the Silurian system in the science of geology. Though not easy, the task was essentially accomplished in four years, and symmetry appeared in what had been one confused, obscure, and sadly misinterpreted, region of graywacke. The series of rocks below the Old Red was shown in a complete order between that formation and the ancient slate,

and containing fossilised specimens of the earliest of living things. Demonstration was given of a connection between the oldest and the secondary rocks; of succession after succession of animated creatures. In those rocks lay imbedded the beginnings of life: the trilobite, a crustacean somewhat beetle-like in appearance; the orthoceratite, with long straight tapering shell, the first of chambered shells; the feather-like graptolite, the cockle-like orthis, and very many others of unpoetical names, representatives of the creatures that swarmed in the primeval ocean. As a distinctive term was required for these interesting strata, a good one was derived from the name of the powerful tribe who once inhabited the country, and Silurian is accepted by all geologists. These rocks moreover were divided into Upper and Lower Silurian, each division containing fossils not found in the other, among a number in common. Since then a Silurian system has been made out in Sweden, Russia, Bohemia, and the United States, Australia, and other parts of the world, over areas compared with which our Silurian region is insignificant, and in each "the oldest traces of life are the same as the British."

But there are rocks beneath the Lower Silurian, and as they contain no signs of living things, so are they regarded as of more remote antiquity. They are of amazing thickness, twenty-six thousand feet, principally of slate, and as the hill on which we are reclining is composed thereof, they are described as the Longmynd, or Bottom rocks. Great portion of this region is under our eye as we look westwards, clay-slate, sandstone, and schists, the sandstone still retaining the ripple-marks formed on the shallow margin of ancient seas: the records of a time when as it seemed, life

had not begun its wonderful and glorious function. Later researches have however brought to light a solitary inhabitant of that vast and dreary waste, a zoophyte whose structure would be represented by a few divergent fans united at the base. Discovery has been made too, in this neighbourhood, of worm-tracks, and a supposed small portion of a trilobite's tail; but these are too imperfect to be pronounced on with certainty, or to deprive the fanlike *Oldhamia antiqua* of its place at the very top of the list of living creatures.

Thus, while gazing over the sunny prospect, we may mentally contrast the living with the lifeless period—the creation of the present time with that of ages so far remote that no man can tell their number or duration. Did grim silence prevail, broken only by storm and earthquake through that long period, when the Longmynd rocks were deposited, and continue through the Silurian period, with its curious living things which though of subordinate species, yet multiplied exceedingly? But not a fish appears among them; theirs was the period of the invertebrata, except in the latter days of the period, and it is only then and in the succeeding period, when the first little fossil fishes are met with, that we discover the first traces of plant-life, in fossilised specimens of dwarfish vegetation.

Another period comes, that of the Old Red, with numerous fishes, unlike those of our time; and with multiplication of vertebrates there is multiplication of plants—ferns, lycopods, and conifers; and at length, towards the close of the period, an air-breathing animal appears—the Terlepeton. The carboniferous era follows, with its equable climate, and grand prolific growths, when gigantic forms of trees and animals,

and myriads of shellfish of the same common species, flourished alike within the tropics and around the poles.

So we may sit lost in a geological day-dream, or musing on sober facts, remembering that the carboniferous system lies between the Old Red and the New; that, of this New Red, in which the geologist finds fossil footmarks, the people of the western border have built their towns, churches, and cathedrals; and while happy in the thought of our own coaly wealth, taking comfort on behalf of future generations, who, as Sir Roderick infers, will one day dig coal from "vast depths" below the New Red of the plain of Shrewsbury. Or shall we indulge in speculations on the mighty chemistry which converted limestone into gypsum and marble, and shale into mica-schist, and set veins of metal flowing through the heart of the hills?

We look at the peaceful valleys, the gently winding streams, the rounded hills and rugged mountains, and fancy they have had no ruder shock than from tempest, or it may be the conflict of armed hosts. But, to quote Cuvier's words, "our ideas change as soon as we dig into that soil which now presents so peaceful an aspect, or ascend the hills which border the plains; our ideas are expanded in proportion to the extension of the view, and we begin to comprehend the full extent and grandeur of those ancient events which have preceded the existence of our species."

But the day wanes. My shout calls Temperans from his rambling feast; we look our farewells across the western country, and, on recrossing the summit, to the peaks of Brecon, and heartily enjoy the prospect while descending to the pleasant little town. Was it from a

desire to dance, inspired by the sight of pleasant scenery, that the adage arose—

> "I am of Shropshire, my shins be sharpe,
> Lay woode to the fyre, and dresse me my harpe!"

There is something for thoughtful contrast during the descent, in the sight of the old Roman way and the new railway, over which we need not become vain-glorious. Though bishop Swinfield paid a penny in 1290 for a guide from Church Stretton to Pontesbury, and we travel by steam, our century has not thereby the monopoly of wisdom, poetry, or loving-kindness.

The train arrives: away we go northwards, past the grand slopes of Caradoc, past the Lawley, past fields, farms, and villages, among which a few miles to the right is Acton Burnell, where the House of Commons sat in the abbey barn in the days of Edward I. Soon our journey ends under the castle of Shrewsbury, or Sewsbury, if we leave out the *hr* as many of the natives do.

CHAPTER XV.

Shrewsbury: a Town worth the Seeing—Timbered Houses—Architecture of the Olden Time—The Picturesque and the Plague—Pride Hill—The Guild-House—High Street—Groups of Gables—Market Square—Duke Richard—The Council-House—Quaint Old Towns of Toil and Traffic—Charles I. and James II.—The Grammar School—Memorable Scholars—A Philosopher's Birthplace—Curious Names—Historical Sites—The Butter Cross—St. Alkmund's—What the Devil did—The Castle—The Way to Bosworth Field—The Museum—Relics of Colonial Rome—The Doctor's Stamp—Bones and Skulls—Ethnological Conclusions—The River-Path—The Quarry—No Fruit, but Plenty of Cakes—St. Mary's—A Noble Church—Monuments—View from the Tower—Haughmond Hill—Hotspur and Henry—Douglas and Glyndwr—Memorial Lay.

THERE is much to be seen in Shrewsbury well worth the seeing. A town of twenty thousand inhabitants, it still retains traces of the rank it once held as metropolis of the west, and peculiarities of aspect which no other town in the realm can show to the same extent. Somewhat familiarised with the ins and outs of the place by sundry visits, we will now perambulate at leisure, and look out for antiquities. Coming to Butcher Row, on our way from the station to the middle of the town, we see timbered houses in a narrow thoroughfare, and at once turn aside to view such interesting specimens of old domestic architecture. There they stand, crowding together with overhanging gables, queer dormer windows, and panelled fronts: a curious chequer-work, wherein the broad black lines are displayed upright,

horizontal, and diagonal, with varied artifice. And here and there a bracket catches the eye, or a penthouse roof and railed recesses, and breadths of ornament on facia and cornice. The ground floors recede, and shops are gloomy, and ceilings low, and upstairs you find the same want of height and breadth of window by which the olden time contrived to favour at once the picturesque and the plague. This, however, is but a foretaste: on Pride Hill we see a tall, well-kept front, and greater exhibition of ornament; and a few yards distant appears the house of a guild—the Fraternity of the Holy Cross, as is supposed, a venerable-looking structure of the fifteenth century with an arcaded ground-floor, and arched panels, and brackets and springers curiously ornamented, and so much of carving on the facias and mouldings and ends of the beams as will repay a little study, and set you thinking of mediæval magnificence. Then in High Street we come upon another group of gables—once the mansion of the Irelands of Albrighton, now divided into shops where plateglass and millinery contrast strangely with the architectural fashion of a former day. Scarcely a street but rewards your exploration with some interesting relic; and when you have looked at the Market Square, and the fantastic building in the centre of the space, with round arches below, mullioned windows, and high-peaked gables and pinnacles above, and the arms of Queen Elizabeth, and the date 1596 carven on the principal front, and the statue "armed from head to heel" of Duke Richard, father of Edward IV.;—when you have looked at this, and the handsome gateway of the Council House, and at many other vestiges of former generations, you will perhaps think that Shrewsbury, before modern innova-

tion commenced, must have borne a marked likeness to some of those "quaint old towns of toil and traffic," still represented by Bruges, Ghent, or Nuremberg.

The innovator is sometimes a spoiler: when Charles I., confiding in the loyalty of Shropshire, lodged under the roof of that Council House for six weeks, and James II. held his court there forty-five years later, the spacious hall and wainscoted chambers could shew the ornamented ceilings, the richly-carved chimney-pieces, the stained glass in which art once delighted to manifest its skilful aptitude and abounding resources. Now the chimney-pieces must be sought for in country mansions, and the ceilings somewhere in the archives of utility. And so in other houses about the town, the desire for height and light has made havoc with the proud things of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The Grammar School, situate near the Castle, bears its tale of more than three hundred years bravely: reminding us of Edward the Sixth's love of learning, and of memorable names among its scholars—Sir Philip Sidney, Lord Brook, Wycherley, and Ambrose Phillips, Bishop Butler, and not a few others. Jeffries the Execrable must not be mentioned in the same sentence with wise and good men. The schoolroom, chapel, and library have the quiet antique air which befits a place of learning, and favours the revival of old associations. A modern instance comes to mind as we traverse the Frankwell suburb, where, scarcely seen from the road, stands the red brick house which suggests recollections of that Doctor Erasmus Darwin of Derby, who wrote the *Botanic Garden* and *Zoonomia*—works once held in high repute, for there was born his grandson, the present Charles Darwin, whose voyages and travels

are delightful to read, whose published researches have widened the limits of geology and natural history, and interfused science with an eminently significant purpose, and whose arguments are as much distinguished for candour and philosophy, as for knowledge and scholarship.

What curious names the streets have!—Mardol, Dogpole, Wyle Cop, Shoplatch, of which perhaps a Welshman would be able to suggest the etymology, and derive it from the period when the town was Pengwern, the capital of Powysland, and residence of the Welsh princes. Or does it originate in a later time, when the Saxon Scrobbesbyrig—hill of shrubs—had supplanted the British name? Murivance explains itself; here we are on a portion of the town walls where one of the old towers still remains, now looking down on a peaceful slope of gardens. The narrow declivitous thoroughfare of Water Lane shows us where the Parliamentary troops were secretly admitted while besieging the town in 1644—45. The Butter Cross suggests an earlier time, for it stands on the place where David of Wales was tortured to death by order of Edward I., and where certain noble and knightly prisoners, captured at the Battle of Shrewsbury, lost their heads. Under the graceful spire of St. Alkmund's, or Stalkmun's, as the natives have it, we are reminded of Ethelfleda, who built a church on the spot in the tenth century—of the stately edifice that followed, which the parishioners pulled down in a panic because St. Chad's fell; in which church, as the chronicler tells, writing in 1533, "this yere, upon twelffe daye, in Shrowsbury, the Dyvyll appearyd in Saint Alkmond's churche there when the preest was at high masse, with great tempeste and darknesse, so

that as he passyd through he mountyd up the steeple in the sayde churche, tering the wyers of the clocke, and put the print of hys clawes uppon the 4th bell; and tooke one of the pynnacles awaye with hym, and for the tyme stayed all the bells in the churches within the sayde towne that they could neyther toll nor ringe."

And so while passing hither and thither, our thought flits to and fro among the centuries. The castle grounds, approached by a lofty arched gateway, contain vestiges of our old acquaintance, Roger de Montgomery's stronghold, and the keep and round towers built by Edward the First. We can imagine its history from the glimpses we have had of the olden time in our wanderings through the county. Near the Welsh bridge stand a few houses of the time of Henry the Seventh. At Ludlow we saw the lodgings of the two young princes; at Bridgenorth we were not far from the place where the Duke of Buckingham, riding one day in discontented mood, met by accident the Lady Margaret, Countess of Richmond, and, as he relates, "communed with her a little concernynge her sonne;" and here we are in the streets through which the Earl of Richmond marched on his way from Milford Haven, to victory and vengeance at Bosworth field.

In College Street, one of the grassy streets which may be seen here and there out of the main thoroughfare, is situate the Museum of the Shropshire and North Wales Natural History and Antiquarian Society, whose collections justify the distinctive name, especially since the addition of the relics brought from Wroxeter. We looked at the fauna and fossils, but were most interested by the sculptures, tesseræ, hairpins, combs, rings, and specimens of pottery which had been so recently dug up in the old Roman city. We

saw roofing tiles and flags, the latter pierced with a hole for the peg or nail, as modern tiles are; fragments of window-glass, and of glass utensils, the more remarkable as being older by nearly a thousand years than what has long been considered the first introduction of glass windows into England. Some of the pottery is of native—that is, Roman Shropshire manufacture; some, better in quality, is from Upchurch, on the banks of the Medway, one of the most extensive of Roman potteries. There are knives, weapons, weights, playthings, beads, a coining mould, and a medicine stamp. Many more things there are, and in all we discover how much the life of fifteen hundred years ago had of the means and appliances familiar to ours. The inscription on the stamp, as rendered by Mr. Wright, almost provokes a smile as we read—THE DIALEBANUM OF TIBERIUS CLAUDIUS THE PHYSICIAN, FOR ALL COMPLAINTS OF THE EYES, TO BE USED WITH EGG; for it makes us aware that Professor Infallible, with his wonderful ointment, was anticipated even before the dark ages. And along with all these things are a few mortal remains of those to whom they once were household objects, or stable gear, or military equipments: a few bones and skulls over which ethnologists have pondered and argued in endeavours to determine what manner of people inhabited the ancient city. Their conclusions show the Celtic form of cranium to be the most numerous.

To appreciate the situation of Shrewsbury you must walk all round the peninsula on the river bank, and note its circumference of meadows and bold slopes thickly sprinkled with trees. The Quarry, with its twenty acres of sward, and avenues of lime and chestnut, and pleasant path curving along the margin of the

stream, will perhaps detain you on the way, and inspire you to remember it ever afterwards as one of the finest public walks in the kingdom. We thought to sit on the grassy bank, and enjoy a feast of strawberries under the ample branches; but although we searched and inquired in every likely part of the town, and went up alleys, attentive to suggestions, no fruit could we discover, and we had to satisfy our longing with the information that there would be plenty on market-day. Once a week seems but a poor condition for a metropolis of the west; no wonder it has suffered cruelly at times from the "sweating-sickness." But confectioners' shops are numerous, for Shrewsbury cakes are not less famous than Banbury cakes; and the sight of many a display will make you aware that a variety of dainties suitable for Christmas-tide is acceptable to Shropshire folk in the dog-days.

St. Mary's spire has caught our eye from time to time; let us go and look at the church from which it springs so gracefully to a height of more than two hundred feet. If you ever miss a train at Shrewsbury, as you are likely to do with the exceedingly unpunctual service, do not stay fretting at the station, but walk up to St. Mary's, and let the charm of art and architecture have its way. The styles of three different centuries, including transition work, and a panelled oaken ceiling over the nave, beautifully carved and ornamented with pendents and bosses, and a 'Jesse window,' and the gorgeous gleams of coloured glass, will make you forget your vexation, and think that a journey on purpose to see so interesting an edifice would be well bestowed.

The chancel is of the Decorated style: one of the windows representing the life of St. Bernard, is con-

jectured to be a design of Albert Dürer's. The Jesse window is supposed to have been presented five hundred years ago to the monastery of Gray Friars by the then Lord of Powis, and dame Hawise his wife: from the monastery it was transferred to St. Chad's, and now, after three removals, beautifies St. Mary's. The large west window, in course of restoration at the time of our visit, will, when complete, demonstrate that the fame of Shrewsbury for stained glass is well-merited. About the walls are the monumental memorials of eminent Salopians: among them appears the name of Admiral Benbow; of Blakeway, the native historian; of the Earl of Worcester, who lost his head for helping Hotspur; and Bishop Butler's memory is perpetuated by a statue, which exhibits Baily's skill upon Carrara marble.

We will mount to the top of the tower, and thence look over town and country. Now we see how the mazy-looking assemblage of streets and lanes, of roofs and gardens, chimneys and trees, covers a bold peninsula which the river encircles, leaving but a narrow isthmus. The whole ring of the stream is visible, in the "sundry gyres" of the rhymer, who describes it as so enamoured of Shrewsbury, that it returns as often as it takes leave of the favoured spot. We see the Welsh bridge, whence starts the road for Wales; St. Chad's churchyard, where the heavy old church fell in 1788, leaving unharmed only a chantry chapel, now known as the Bishop's chancel; the castle, and many a time-worn relic or memorable spot while carrying our eye across to the English bridge and the suburb beyond, where stand the venerable abbey church, the tall Doric column which commemorates a noble and victorious soldier—Lord Hill, the White

Hall, a picturesque Tudor mansion, and beyond, in the fields, according to custom, the little church of St. Giles. The Archaeological Institute have made a happy choice in selecting Shrewsbury for their meeting-place in 1860.

Notwithstanding that you must scramble inconveniently from side to side between the base of the spire and the parapet, the tower-top is a desirable place for an opening or parting view of Shropshire and its chief town. From the Wrekin to the Breiddens, from the blue heights of Flintshire to the Clees, all the hills are within sight which have beautified our prospects and animated our rambles during the past fortnight: and while these make up the grander features, many a wooded slope and minor elevation diversify the widespread landscape, sweetly soliciting the eye by their beauty, and the mind by the recollections they awaken of scenes and incidents which have become historical. There is a charm in the varying tints of those distant summits which compels us to linger; and a strange impression is produced by contrasting the silence of that lovely distance with the crowding activity and noise of a town.

Looking northwards we see Haughmond Hill about four miles distant, concealing the ruins of an abbey among the trees on its flank. Near it rises a clump of firs known as the Queen's Bower, where, as tradition tells, queen Eleanor waited while Percy and Douglas marshalled their forces side by side under their once hostile banners—the Lion and the Bloody Heart, against the five golden lilies of the Royal Standard. And not far therefrom, marked by the church erected in memory of the slain, is Battlefield, where on the

20th of July, 1403, Henry Bolingbroke gained the victory over the valiant house by whose aid he had won the crown; when the impetuous Percy fell, the Douglas was captured, and Worcester was "borne to the death," while Owen Glyndwr, instead of bringing up his army to take part in the fight, looked on from the safe upper branches of the Shelton oak.

"In that red sea of civil strife
The Barons' star has set;
But the Percy's truth and honour
No heart will e'er forget.

They may keep his corpse unburied,
And bid his head look down—
Vain mock'ry of a traitor's doom!—
O'er the great northern town.

Small need has he of grave or pall—
Hotspur can never die,
As meaner men. His name is still
A living memory.

For long as Shakespeare's language lasts
Shall live the Percy name;
And England glory in the tale
Of the great House's fame."

CHAPTER XVI.

The Abbey Foregate—Monkish Remains—The Abbey-Tombs—The Pest-Basin—Old Izaak's Inspirer—The Severn—Atcham—A Pleasant Birthplace—Albert Dürer's Carvings—The Tern—Wroxeter, the British Pompeii—Aspects—Excavations—Ancient Uriconium—The Old Wall—Discoveries—Walls were Walls—Decorations—Hypocausts—Ancient Soot—Starved to Death—Ancient Dust-heap: Modern Treasure—Disappointed Excursionists—Effects of Want of Rain—Mischief—Snob and Fool, the Inscription Destroyers—Three Miles in Compass—A Convenient Quarry—Present Proceedings—A Market-Place—Deformed Skulls—Watling Street—Wrekin and Uricon—Eyton—Leighton—The Wrekin—Dead Beat—Haymaker's Hospitality—Stealthy Movements—The Crowded Bed—Cressage—Iron Grave Plates—The First Iron Bridge—The Earthquake—Buildwas Abbey—A Cut-off—Coalbrook Dale—Romantic and Mechanical—Skilful Castings—Fading Quakerism—A Week's Holiday—End of the Walk all round the Wrekin, and Return to Birmingham.

It was evening when we walked forth of the town, crossing the English bridge to Abbey Forrit, as the natives call the suburb of Abbey Foregate. Churchyard, the native poet, describes it as

> "A long great streate, well builded large and faire,
> In as good ayre, as may be wisht with wit:
> Where abbey stands, and is such ring of belles,
> As is not found, from London unto Welles."

There are old dwelling-houses here, and relics of monkish occupation, the infirmary, dormitory, the hospitium, a fragment of the refectory wall bearing a wonderfully elegant spécimen of constructive art, supposed to have

been the Reader's pulpit. Very venerable is the appearance of the abbey, so numerous are the wrinkles which old Time has traced upon the dark red stone since the days when St. Wenefred's bones were brought hither from Denbighshire, and miracles were worked at her shrine; and having set eyes thereon you will be constrained to tarry, till having noted all that can be seen from the outside you pass within. The aspect is cathedral-like: the dim religious light prevails, while there are tombs which seem to keep the Past from passing away. On one you see the effigy of Roger de Montgomery, founder of the abbey; he built it on the site of a little wooden church, erected by Siward the Saxon, and here after passing the last days of his life habited as a Benedictine monk, he was buried, and his son after him, Hugh Goch, as the Welsh called him, whom King Magnus slew with an arrow on the coast of Anglesey. Knights in armour and civilians in gowns here lie side by side; among the latter appear Speaker Onslow, with the palms of his hands pressed together, and his wife sleeping by his side.

We loitered long enough to renew our former impression, then walked out to St. Giles's, which presents a praiseworthy example of restoration, where the Pest-Basin is still to be seen in the churchyard. A little to the west is Sutton Spa, a mineral spring of some repute, and beyond, the village of Meole Brace, the birthplace of Thomas Barker, whose *Art of Angling* furnished quaint old Izaak with directions for "making and angling with a fly for a trout." Continuing along the main road we struck the bank of Severn, which having made a great north-easterly sweep, at length pursues its southerly course, and presently crossing the bridge we came to the *Berwick Arms* at Atcham.

The house being overcrowded with visitors from Wolverhampton, we had to bivouac with a blanket a-piece in a little parlour, and felt as happy the next morning as if we had been in bed, so invigorating was the early coolness when we strolled out to explore for the key of the church. If the Atcham of 1075 was as prettily embowered by trees and enlivened by water as the present, Ordericus Vitalis had a pleasant birth-place. The church, with square ivy-covered tower, standing in a meadow near the river, has a picturesque effect in the view as you approach by the road from Shrewsbury, and rewards near examination. It has a good Norman doorway, an old porch, some old pews and curiosities, and a reading-desk with panels representing the parable of the prodigal son, carved by the hand of Albert Dürer. Happily they are well preserved.

Resuming our highway route we skirted Attingham park, the seat of Lord Berwick, crossed the Tern near its confluence with the Severn, then turning into a bye-way on the right, came ere long to the place which a learned antiquary describes as the British Pompeii.

The country hereabouts, east of the Severn, is of a quiet rural character, farm succeeding to farm and village to village, on ground more or less undulating. Two or three years ago you might have walked from Atcham to Wroxeter and noticed nothing more remarkable on the way after leaving the highroad, than a fragment of an ancient wall and a smithy. If curious to examine a relic of antiquity, you had entered the field, you would have pronounced it to be a relic of imperial Rome, and perhaps have sought for other traces. Though not on a hill, you would have been struck by sight of the extensive prospect which the

spot commands, and remembered that the Romans were careful to select such a position for their camps. It may be you would have noticed the soil of the field as more resembling garden-mould than ordinary arable soil, and have discovered signs of a low mound running across the neighbouring inclosures; and having done that, you would have stood to contemplate and admire the grand old Wrekin, rising about two leagues distant to an imposing height, and then have walked onwards not much the wiser.

Not so, however, in the summer of 1859. There was the Wrekin to animate us during our walk, by sight of its towering mass, wooded to the summit; and when we came within view of the fragment of wall and Wroxeter church, our expectations were as lively as Mr. Oldbuck himself could have desired. We passed into a turnip-field, and saw long heaps of earth, and what looked like bricklayer's rubbish, stretching in various directions across the young plants: we saw a refreshment tent, a table covered with fragments of pottery, a Visitors'-Book, and contribution-box, and knew we had arrived on the site of ancient Uriconium. We examined the fragments, entered our names in the book, dropped a coin into the box, and then went to look into the trenches. There we saw the lower courses of thick walls, steps, passages, portions of the ground-floor of buildings and hypocausts. The most important of the excavations extend southwards from the solid mass of masonry, which, about seventy feet long, twenty high, and three feet thick, has long been known in the neighbourhood as the 'Old Wall.' Some of the trenches, in which the least important discoveries had been made, were filled up, in order that the farmer should not be deprived of too much of his land at once,

and the result was a strange mixture of antiquity, agriculture, and ugly disorder.

Two excavators were on the spot, one of whom gave us intelligent explanations of the progress of the work, pointing out where the long parallel and transverse trenches, dug on the northern side of the Old Wall, had exposed long courses of walls, from three to four feet in thickness, the space between which was paved with small red bricks, laid herring-bone-wise. There were found fragments of stucco, one bearing three letters of an inscription, portions of columns and capitals, part of an iron chain, some of the iron implements which we saw in the Museum at Shrewsbury, doorways and steps much worn by the tread of feet, and mosaic pavements. From all these appearances the conclusion had been drawn that this was the site of a large public building erected at the corner where two streets met at right angles. One of these thoroughfares is the present Watling Street Road; the other was discovered on carrying the trench beyond the northernmost wall, when the roadway paved with pebbles was laid bare. Of all this, however, we saw nothing; the excavations had been carried on long enough to make the discoveries above-mentioned, then everything was buried once more, and green stripes of young turnip-leaves were already visible on the disturbed surface.

The Old Wall is very different in appearance from the Roman Wall in Northumberland, being built of small squared stones, with a layer of red tiles at intervals, which resembles what bricklayers call a 'bonding course.' A similar style prevails in the walls of that interesting Roman city at Silchester, in Hampshire. Two ragged holes are broken through it, one of them probably a doorway, so that the solid construction of

the whole thickness can be plainly seen. Its total height is thirty-four feet, of which fourteen are below ground, as was ascertained by the digging of a trench at the commencement of the excavations, from which a notion may be formed of the height of houses in a colonial city of the empire, and of the depth at which the remains are buried by the accumulations of a thousand years.

The northern face of this Old Wall is supposed to have bounded an alley that ran between it and the public building now reburied. Its southern face shows imperfect traces of lateral walls and arches that once abutted thereupon, and on opening the ground opposite these traces, the walls were discovered running at right angles, forming parallelograms of uniform size, which formerly had vaulted roofs, and as a quantity of burnt wheat was found in one of them, it is conjectured that they were store-rooms.

It is on this, the southern side of the Old Wall, that the most important discoveries have as yet been made; and there, immediately adjoining the four supposed store-rooms, are remains which make manifest to this busy nineteenth century, the arts and customs of the days of Constantine. Walls were walls in those days: no flimsy lath and plaster, but solid thicknesses of three feet or more, even between room and room of the same house. We see that the inside was smoothly stuccoed, painted and decorated, and the outside was painted in stripes of red and yellow. We see the pillars of the hypocausts, square red tiles piled one on the other to a height of three feet, on which the floors, formed of cement, were laid. We see the marks on the walls of the flue-tiles through which the heat ascended, and in the hypocausts the soot left by the

fires that blazed long before England was parcelled into shires. Excavator indicates the corner in one of the hypocausts where the three skeletons were found—of an old man and two women—relics, as is inferred, of barbarian cruelty. Near the old man lay a small heap of copper coins, one hundred and thirty-two in number, and with them a few rusty nails and fragments of decayed wood; and the supposition is, that when the city was sacked by Scandinavian pirates, the three individuals to whom the skeletons belonged, crept into the hypocaust for safety, the old man taking with him his scanty savings, and there perished of starvation. There they crouched till retreat was cut off by the fall of burning masses in the fire that followed pillage and slaughter, or they were suffocated by smoke; and now the sun looks into their hiding-place, and men and women of the latest time and of the race whose dominion engirdles the globe, come to the long-buried habitation and sigh for their terrible fate.

Excavator points out a drain which was discovered at the bottom of a small square chamber, and tells us what he thinks about it, and what he has heard Mr. Wright, and Dr. Johnson, and other learned antiquaries, remark concerning the various discoveries. He shows us the dust-hole, the corner of a small room into which the serving-men and maids of that ancient time cast the sweepings of the floors, little thinking that they were forming a treasure-heap for after ages. In that heap, which was about half a yard in thickness, were found most of the small articles—the hair-pins, needles, buckles, coins, nails, and things of iron, bronze and lead, which are now preserved in the Shrewsbury Museum. In other places the floors were strewn with broken glass, and tilesherds, some of clay,

some of sandstone flags; and broken pottery was here and there met with, of which two kinds were manufactured in Shropshire, one, light-coloured, from Broseley clay, the other, red, from one of the clay-beds near the Severn. And besides the decorations in colour, enough of shafts and columns, and capitals plain and carved have been discovered to demonstrate that Uriconium was a city in which the adornments of architecture were liberally displayed. How happy antiquaries would be if only a single street could be rebuilt!

But to an ordinary visitor the old city would be a very disappointing place. We had seen in Birmingham advertisements of *Excursion Trains to the Buried City of Wroxeter—the British Pompeii*, and could easily believe what Excavator told us of the proceedings of the excursionists on their arrival: how that the majority declared themselves 'sold,' and went off forthwith to the refreshment-tent; some thought it hardly worth while to travel to look at rubbish, and asked where the houses, doors, and windows were. "How could there be a city without houses?" to which Excavator, somewhat proud of his knowledge, would reply that, for want of rain they hadn't come up yet. The simple truth is, that no one should go to Wroxeter with overwrought expectations, or who is not prepared to see much, not to say very much, with his mind. Moreover, it seems to me that a visit should first be paid to the Museum at Shrewsbury, for, having seen the many interesting relics there arranged, things of daily life, the visitor on coming to the city would be able to rebuild and repeople it in imagination.

We may smile at the disappointment of excursionists; but not at the perpetration of mischief. To

be told that all the columns of the largest hypocaust had been wilfully knocked down by a party of miners, and that we saw only the repiling as nearly as possible to their original height, was a shock to the sentiment with which we regarded them. Worse than this was the destruction of an inscription of two lines traced in large characters on the wall of one of the hypocausts before the sense had been made out, by a couple of stupid visitors who poked off the stucco with their walking-sticks. All that we now know thereof is that the words were Latin. To complete their exploit the precious pair should have written Mr. Snob and Mr. Fool in the Visitors' Book.

The former extent of the city may be judged of from the fact that the low bank which now covers the line of the outer wall is three miles in compass. The ground within' contains many such things as those last brought to light, and it appears that discovery has followed digging from time immemorial. In places the ground is uneven and hummocky, as if with an unusual elevation of masonry underneath. For centuries that Old Wall has surveyed a large burial-place, and we have here an example of what time and circumstance can do in the way of interment. To the fire of the Northmen, there followed the pillage of builders, who, whether they had to erect an abbey, or a house, found the ruined city a convenient quarry. With and after them came generations of treasure-seekers, in whose eyes nothing was valuable but gold or silver, and many things did they scatter and destroy in their mercenary search. Thus, walls were pulled down which would never have fallen of themselves, and floors and pavements were broken up. Meanwhile the lighter materials decayed, dust accumulated in the hollows, vegetation

appeared, and at length the whole place was overgrown by grass and weeds, and these effects repeated year after year at length buried the city of the Cornavii: and now harvests are reaped, and sheep are fed above the site where priests offered sacrifice to pagan deities, where the imperial legions lay in garrison, where councils deliberated on war and peace, where young men and maidens, fathers and mothers, and happy children played out their parts, little dreaming of the days when their habitation should be a wonder and a mystery to men speaking with another tongue.

Since our visit certain difficulties raised by the farmer whose fields were invaded have been overcome, and the Excavation Committee by arrangement with the Duke of Cleveland, owner of the land, are to have four acres of the ground in which the excavations will remain permanently open as a visible memorial of the past—of an important period of British and Roman history. Two of the acres comprise the present excavations; the other two are to be selected on any spot judged most desirable by the committee. Were I Duke of Cleveland I would save them from the embarrassment of choice, among temptations so manifold, by granting them permission to open the entire area of the city, and to expose the city-wall in all its circumference. What a storehouse of knowledge and elucidation would there be open to antiquaries!

In the further progress of the work, the series of hypocausts are concluded to have belonged to a large establishment of public baths. If the uninformed visitor would but regard them as the flues by which the large air-chambers of a Roman bath were heated, and remember that hot air and not water was the primary consideration, he would perhaps not pass them

by with his present indifference. Near the hedge on the west the remains as supposed of a market-place or bazaar have been discovered, and on the south, another street with paving and kerb-stones running parallel to that seen by the excavators north of the Old Wall. Numerous walls have been met with on the southern side of this street, probably of private dwellings; near them lies an unoccupied space which, it is thought, was once the forum, and of minor objects enough have come to light to render the choice of the first two acres highly meritorious to the choosers. When the four acres shall be fully exposed, even phlegmatic visitors will agree that "we have here one of the most interesting monuments of antiquity which our country can boast, and one which will do honour to the Duke of Cleveland's liberality," as Mr. Wright says.

More skulls have been found, all so curiously deformed that a question arose, as to whether they might not have belonged to some tribe who made themselves ugly by distortion of the skull. The forehead was pushed down on one side towards the ear, slanting most unnaturally, and carrying with it the eye-socket, whereby one eye being an inch lower than the other, the ancient owner must have squinted hideously. With a view of settling the question, the skulls were sent to London to be examined and discussed at a meeting of the Ethnological Society; and although they did not settle it, the evidence seems to be conclusive, corroborated as it is by instances of deformity in fossil skulls, that the distortion was occasioned by pressure of superincumbent earth upon bony material softened by a damp soil. Local testimony, moreover, strengthens this conclusion, for one of the skulls which lay on its side, the

position most easily affected, was much broken, and crushed well-nigh flat by the long-continued pressure.

We strolled hither and thither, not content with a single look; surveyed the scene from the top of one of the mounds, paced Watling Street, the narrow road which we had seen the day before creeping up the side of Caradoc, which once crossed the Severn by a bridge near the southern corner of the city—and then we walked on to Wroxeter. With the grand old hill in sight, we saw how happily the conquerors had chosen the name of the place, for Uricon is but the Romanized form of Wrekin. The Saxons in their turn combining Wrekin-ceastre originated the present name Wroxeter.

There is no public-house in the village, if village the few scattered houses can be called. The church with a square diagonal-buttressed tower, is suggestive of Norman rule and later antiquity. Its font is an old Roman capital hollowed to form a basin: on each side of the churchyard-gate stands a Roman column, crowned by an ornamented capital: other relics are preserved in the neighbouring gardens, one of which is a broken circular stone, supposed to have been a Roman milestone.

Then, preferring a lane, though with some increase of distance, to the hard turnpike road, we walked on through Eyton, and after many windings on the slopes of the vale, struck the highway near Leighton. Every step brought us nearer to the Wrekin, and with a changeful view; the long flank stretching towards Wellington disappeared, and we saw only the bold front of the hill, the wooded cone which we had seen from afar rising in the landscape; anon that receded and the eastern flank appeared bristling with acres of trees.

The reader who has surveyed with me the prospect from the hills of Shropshire, will be able to imagine the view seen from the summit of the Wrekin, a height of thirteen hundred and twenty feet. An old topographer describes it as "delightfully awful." Easy of access, and situate near the populous midland country, it is the best known of all the hills in the county, and will not be forgotten while the proverb remains familiar in the mouths of the natives. It is best approached from Wellington, a station on the railway, whence a pleasant walk of about an hour brings the wayfarer without laborious exertion to the top; and once there the reward is great. The extent of country overlooked may be judged of from the fact that the Wrekin can be seen from Edgehill, near Banbury, as I know from very pleasurable observation with my own eyes.

In my first Shropshire ramble, I turned off at Shiffnal, and walked direct to the highest part of the hill through the black district of Horse Hays and Little Wenlock, and found the climb to the summit, up the steep slopes and screes, exceedingly fatiguing. Rest is perhaps the more enjoyable combined with the beauty of scenery, and I lingered so long as to find myself benighted, and in sportsman's phrase 'dead beat,' after a descent into byeways on the opposite side. No public-house was discoverable, and I was not sorry to fall in with a haymaker, who offered me a bed. His wife was as ready to be hospitable as he, and, on our arrival at the cottage, set about preparing tea, and then while I ate, took a pair of clean brown sheets from a chest and went up-stairs. Soon my bed was ready in a room of which the window was not made to open, nor the door to shut, and where under the tiles the temperature seemed stifling. I was dropping off

to sleep when hearing a stealthy step, I asked, "Who's there?"

"Beg your pardon, sir, only come to lay baby down."

I had noticed a little truckle-bed at the foot of mine: baby was laid therein, and the mother crept down-stairs. By-and-by the stealthy step came again, and imagining the circumstances, I said nothing: the mother came in, drew the curtains softly across the foot of my bed, pinned them together, and then lay down beside her baby. Another half-hour passed, and another stealthy step was heard, and in the dim light I saw a white figure enter, and disappear behind the curtains. And then I knew that the hospitable rustics were crowding themselves painfully that I might have their bed; and remembered their favour the next morning when accompanying my gift with a short lecture about ventilation.

At Leighton the river again becomes visible and the views improve. Cressage, a village on the opposite side of the valley, is worth passing notice, as its name presents a curious example of transformation from the original—Christ's Oak. Presently Buildwas Abbey comes in sight, on the level green margin of the right bank: we pass a small church, and a churchyard which indicates nearness to a foundry, for the memorials of the dead are not inscribed stones, but plates of iron with letters in relief. Farther down, where the stream flows deep between precipitous banks, appears the first iron bridge ever erected in England; and there crowding under the heights is the town of Iron-bridge —a busy river-port at the outlet of Coalbrook-dale. Hereabouts was the remarkable landslip ninety years ago which affrighted the neighbourhood, made the Severn falter in its course, and was regarded as an

earthquake and judgment from Heaven, and was the occasion of a thrilling sermon by Fletcher of Madeley.

We crossed over to the Abbey, and found the nave traversed by the road of a farm-yard with a high wooden fence on each side, to shut out intruders from the ruin. We climbed over the fence to the choir, and there lay supine for awhile on the thin grass, all our sentiment overpowered by the one intense desire for shade. Ghuznee itself could scarcely be hotter than Severn-side was during the noon-tide hours of this day. By-and-by we could lift up our eyes and take heed of the architecture, which is massive and singularly bare of ornament. Rows of ponderous columns supporting heavy round arches, stand along the nave; the four tower arches with their pendentives remain, and if curious in architectural details, you will note the signs of transition-work. It is a compact, well-preserved ruin, but owing to its plainness appears most picturesque at a distance. Roger bishop of Chester built it in 1135, for Cistercian monks.

Having during our former travel, rambled down the river-bank from Ironbridge to Bridgenorth, we now, soon after our return to the road, took a steep cut-off over the hill to Coalbrook-dale, a place known far beyond the limits of the county. From whichever side approached, the sight of the Dale gives pleasure, but most to the wayfarer crossing the tame levels from Wellington; to him the rapidly inclining road between steep and varied wooded slopes, and the sound of the stream that curves hither and thither, past houses and gardens scattered on the heights surrounded by foliage, past long ranges of smoky workshops, past workmen's cottages, past heaps of iron and coal—to him all this seen and heard amid the sylvan

windings of the Dale has a singular and somewhat romantic effect.

Here are the foundries which have made the name of Coalbrook-dale famous; where cast-iron is produced for luxury and for use with admirable combinations of beauty and elegance. A rustic who once talked with me thereupon, said: "I have seen 'em cast a wheat-sheaf not so big as my thumb, and 'twas as nat'ral as a real un. You could see every straw, and the twist o' the band, and count the corns in the ears as if they had growed." For my part, while looking at the light and graceful castings in the show-room, I thought it would be possible to cast a lady's bonnet. Worn with flexible steel ribbons such a bonnet would be a 'decided novelty.'

The Dale, moreover, is interesting as an example of the good results consequent on the residence of masters among their workmen: on the one part manners and habits are improved, and a proper feeling of respect is awakened; on the other, sympathy for the industrious throng is fostered by observation and personal intercourse, and wealth and intelligence take pleasure in sharing their advantages with those of much labour and little cultivation. A newly-built Mechanics' Institute—a large and handsome edifice on a commanding site, combining a School of Design, indicates one way of making the advantages available.

The Dale exemplifies yet another particular: the decline of Quakerism. Twenty-five years ago Friends were numerous; now they are too few to constitute a meeting; and if you inquire what has become of them, the answer is, they went over to the Church.

Reinvigorated by hospitality, we walked to the railway-station at Lightmoor, a place smoky from

kilns, and rough and rugged with excavations and heaps of iron-stone, and journeyed thence past Madeley to Shiffnal. This is an old historic town, with an exceedingly good church, which rewards your waiting for a train. If you have time, as I had on a subsequent day, for a six-miles walk to the southward, you may visit Badger Dingle, a pretty place of red rock, wood and water within private grounds, to which access is freely granted. The way thither leads you by field-paths through Ryton, whose vicar is an antiquary and historian of whom Shropshire may well be proud, and to Beckbury across meadows, brooks, and under the shadow of trees.

In closing this portion of my wandering, let me mention that even a week's holiday may be advantageously spent in Shropshire. Sight-seeing begins immediately on entering the county: Albrighton is a good stopping-place for Tong, or an excursion to Lillieshull Abbey: the attractions of Shiffnal are above indicated: from Wellington there is the ascent of the Wrekin: then Shrewsbury with its mediæval features, and interesting Museum; then, with Mr. Wright's interesting little guide-book in hand to Wroxeter, whence a trip may be planned to the Longmynd, Ludlow, and Titterstone Clee, or to Wenlock and Bridgenorth.

The habitual tardiness of the train left us plenty of time for a view of the church, and for me to ascertain by simple addition that my fortnight's wanderings amounted to two hundred miles; and then while the sun was setting, we journeyed back to Birmingham.

Reader! our walk all round the Wrekin is now complete. We have yet two weeks in which to stretch the round to a farther limit.

CHAPTER XVII.

Birmingham—The Four Lampmakers—Going to School for Fun—The Quakers' Sunday School—Early Breakfast—Early Teachers—Early Scholars—A Promising Spectacle—A Lesson, and its Application—The Superintendent—The Savings' Fund—The Boys—A Solution—Well-qualified Teachers—Origin of the School—The Encourager—Joseph Sturge's Good Work—Influence of Example—Material Benefits—The Stockinger—Out of Misery into Enterprise—A Poor Man's Tale—The Faithless Gaffer—Moral Benefits—Recreations—First-day Schools an Institution—Hundreds of Teachers and Thousands of Scholars.

"WHAT d' ye think, Jem? The Gaffer wanted to make me a foreman t' other day, and raise my wages, on'y I can't write. It 's doosid bad for a feller to live to twenty-five and dunno how to write."

This was spoken by one of four journeymen lampmakers, who sat talking in a public-house. It drew a reply—"Why, Dick, the Quakers have got a school where they teaches people to write o' Sunday mornin's."

"Have they? Will they have me?"

"Ay, anybody may go as likes."

"Well then, I'll go," rejoined the first speaker. "Let's all go, for the lark o' the thing," said another. They went, and were admitted.

After a few weeks, one said to another: "I shall cut this. 'Tis too religious for me. I can't come them doses."

"Well, I shan't cut it," was the answer. "We shan't be any the wus for the advice as is give us.

The man as teaches us, can't do it for his own good, for he don't have nothin' for it: so it must be for the good o' we."

Here, reader, is an incident which will serve as introduction to the various phenomena that may come before us during our sojourn in Birmingham. One of the important questions of the day is, as we shall presently see, herein involved.

The school referred to assembles in the British school-house, Severn Street, near the heart of the town: Temperans is one of the teachers, and I, wishing to see it, accompanied him thither on the morning after our return from Shropshire. Arriving punctual to the hour—seven o'clock—we found breakfast ready in an upper room, and forthwith the party, numbering some thirty teachers, seated themselves at table. The majority are adults, and men of consideration in the town, and while looking along the line of faces, I felt how worthy of respect was the motive which brings such a party together at so early an hour, Sunday after Sunday, all through the year.

Towards the close of the repast, the tramp of many feet upon the stair announced the arrival of the scholars; and by half-past seven the several classes were commencing their tasks, in the adjoining room, some writing, some reading, and some in quiet conversation. The large room was filled, and it was an interesting sight to see three hundred of the workingmen of Birmingham seeking knowledge and placing themselves voluntarily under moral training; all clean, and with few exceptions properly clad. What a contrast many of them would exhibit between their skill in handicraft, and their lack of skill in intellectual acquirements. Others, on the contrary, have made

remarkable progress, and rank among the foremost of intelligent artificers. That all must be in earnest is, we may believe, demonstrated by their resisting the temptation to lie late in bed on Sunday mornings, and presenting themselves at school in a condition which promotes self-respect, and wins respect from others.

Temperans sat surrounded by one division of his class, I took a place by his side, and listened while they read a portion from the New Testament, and to the application thereof made by the teacher. The men felt, as the simple words were spoken, that what they had read had a real meaning and a purpose; that pride, hatred and uncharitableness were faults as harmful to heart and mind, as faults of hand to workmanship, and with more lasting consequences; they saw the significance of overcoming by kindness, and were made aware that kindness to all alike, irrespective of rank or station, is among the first and most fruitful of duties. They listened with that fixed attention, and with instances of the play of feature which signify active sympathy between teacher and learner.

Then at a given time the divisions changed places; reading for writing, and the reverse, and thus it went on all over the room. Meanwhile, the superintendent, whose face beaming with benevolence, is an assurance of good works, sat at his table observant of the proceedings, and receiving small sums spared from the weekly earnings to be lodged in the savings-fund of the school.

I went down to the boys' school in a lower room, and there witnessed similar proceedings: the lads, most of them sixteen years of age and upwards, busy over their reading and writing, and on the table lay not a few half-crowns, shillings, and sixpences, a

testimony to their economy and self-denial, and confidence in their teachers.

My heart warmed at sight of the gathering up-stairs and down, and in the solution which it seemed to afford of a question which has long solicited the attention of thoughtful benevolence. The Quakers, with that practical common-sense and beneficent endeavour which appear among their essential characteristics, here show how some part at least of the opprobrium of modern civilisation may be taken away. They are well qualified for the work by their generally good education, unobtrusiveness of manners, and avoidance of a patronising air or attempts to make proselytes: more desirous to do good to others than to swell their own numbers. The scholars, of course, learn by conversation that the Friends' Meeting is open to all comers, but attendance there depends entirely on their own motive. Some do attend, finding comfort and spiritual growth in quiet worship; but the most continue to frequent the church or chapel to which they have been accustomed; or if not accustomed, seek out a place for themselves. Not least among the beneficial results of the school is the habitual respect for Sunday, and its privileges, which rarely fails to appear.

The late Joseph Sturge did many a good work in his day, watching always for occasions of generous beneficence, and succouring with that kindness of heart which, so to speak, animates succour with a living spirit. In the year 1845 he was talking with a few young friends on the deplorable scenes observable in large towns on Sunday mornings: unwashed Laziness lounging in narrow streets; troops of boys making mischief with trees, hedgerows, and fences, or playing

at 'pitch and hustle' in the outskirts, and expressed a regret that Sunday Schools commonly turned their scholars adrift at the ripest age for folly and vice. Could not something be done to mitigate the evil? The question was not started in vain: the young friends present were willing to try; the ways and means were considered; to favour the indispensable condition of early assemblage, Joseph Sturge promised to provide breakfast for all the teachers, and the 'First-day School' was commenced. Difficulties had to be met and overcome, objections from clergymen and dissenting ministers, and especially the disfavour with which some of the Birmingham Friends regarded the undertaking: it was interfering too much with matters out of the Society, and partook too much of a secular character. The school has however outlived the objections, and has steadily flourished, having drawn to itself a body of excellent teachers, and eight hundred willing scholars of both sexes. Joseph Sturge's sympathy therewith never failed; once a month, if not oftener, he would join the teachers at their breakfast, cheering them by his own cheerfulness, encouraging them with words of wisdom, and remaining a glad spectator of their labours till the close of school. At his death the teachers had arranged to defray the cost of the breakfast by a joint subscription, when certain relatives of the deceased notified their intention to continue the benefaction, and they also manifest their goodwill to the school, and affection for the departed, by occasional visits. Truly Joseph Sturge's good work remains of him to testify.

One of the gratifying proofs of the usefulness of the school, and the appreciation in which it is held by those for whom it was commenced, are seen in the

number constantly waiting for admission: the classes having been enlarged to the utmost, new-comers must exercise patience. Birmingham attracts artisans and artificers from all parts of the realm, and from the continent, and the Germans who bring their skill as tin-smiths, or glass-engravers, to a better market than they find in Fatherland, show themselves among the readiest to enter the school. To learn to write, or to improve in spelling and penmanship, appear to be prime motives with those who seek admission; but very few are content to stop at these results; a new motive is awakened, and the greater number—as demonstrated by years of experience—remain in the school for the sake of the religious instruction. They hear brief, simple, and affectionate expositions of Scripture, such as they can all understand, and little by little perceive a meaning in truth and goodness which they never suspected before. What the results are may be seen in their diligent attendance at the school, in their behaviour one towards another, in their daily work, and in their homes. "If our teacher ain't ashamed to stop and shake hands with us, o' worky-days, and ask us how we are getting on, surely the least we can do is to be civil among ourselves:" such is the sentiment. And "when our teacher calls on us he knocks at the door; don't come bouncin' in as if he was somebody; so let us knock where we calls." A man can hardly rise early on a Sunday morning, make himself clean, put on decent attire, and take ninety minutes of proper schooling, and be content to go back to a dirty home, or dissolute companionship; and if he be a husband and father, as many of these scholars are, so much the more will he shrink from impropriety. Hence dwelling-places have become

homes in the best sense of the word; wives and sisters have joined the female school; and neighbourhoods have felt the beneficial influence of good example. One man, a shoemaker, inspired with a desire to impart somewhat of the good he had received, opened a school for outcast boys, and has made a hopeful impression on the hopeless. The four men mentioned at the beginning of this chapter still remain in the school, the discontented one did not "cut it," and is now prosperous; another has become owner of the house in which he dwells; another has risen to be a master lamp-maker, and employs half-a-dozen journeymen and a number of boys on his own account.

There came one Sunday a man craving admission, who, after a while impressed by the teacher's words and ways, trusted him as a friend. "I was a stockin'er (stocking-weaver) at Hinckley," he said, giving some particulars of his history, "and earned on'y six or seven shillin' a week. Little enough to keep myself and wife on, and I was so miserable, that one day I set off for Birmingham to look for some'at better. A precious time I had walking about the streets lookin' for a job: at last a Quaker lady got me to carry in a load o' coals, and give me sixpence more than I bargained for when I'd done, and a meal o' vittles besides. A nice lady she was. I always liked the Quakers after that; and when I heard as they had a Sunday school to teach poor fellers writin', I come to it, and have no call to repent doin' so. Well, sir, I got took on at a screw-factory, kept steady, and had thirteen shillin' a week; sent for my wife and children out o' Leicestershire, and wasn't they happy! Then I was put to overlook a few women, and had sixteen shillin',

and thought my fortin was made; and when a'ter a bit I was rose to a pound, I didn't seem to know what to do wi' so much money. However, the Gaffer failed, and couldn't pay; but I stuck to'n, takin' a bit o' the rough a'ter the smooth; and what did he do, why, sir, when things begun to come round, he turned me off, and took on a new hand. So there I was; but soon got another place at twenty-five shillin' a week: wasn't I happy, sir? Afore long the old Gaffer come and wanted me to go back to'n, and offered twenty-seven shillin', cause the new hand wouldn't suit. No, says I, I've got a good master now; and I ain't a goin' to leave'n for two shillin' a week."

I am not one of those who think it essential or desirable to show that money attends on morality: "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things that he hath," yet it is nevertheless true that morality begets economy, and economy has much to do with domestic comfort. I have had my eye on this Birmingham school for years, have met the scholars on sundry occasions, have called on them in their homes, and could not fail to observe an elevation of sentiment, and a well-to-do aspect, which are not the eminent characteristics of the working-classes generally. And, seeing that the trade of the town is liable to fluctuations, and work to fail, the men find a powerful motive to industry in the desire to provide resources against lack of employment. If all the working-men of England had profited by instruction in the same kind and degree, there would be no room for misgivings on the question of entrusting the six-pound householders with a vote (perhaps there is none as it is); on the contrary, we may believe that the middle and upper classes whose political misconduct

has been made the subject of parliamentary inquiry and condemnation, would be shamed out of their flagrant dishonesty by good example from below.

To return to the school: the adult classes hold a monthly meeting on some evening in the week for social intercourse, to hear reports from the Visitors, who have in the interval gone from house to house to express their sympathy with any of the number who may be sick or in trouble, and grant relief from the Provident Fund. Moreover, as appears by their last annual report, "classes have been formed for reading, grammar, geography, history and arithmetic." Each class entertains itself now and then with a tea-meeting, and twice a year the whole school, with wives and daughters and sisters take tea together; and the men enjoy an annual trip in the summer accompanied by their teachers. To most of them the beginning of the trips was the opening of a new pleasure, of a new sense of enjoyment, in the aspects of Nature; and when, in their first, they looked round on the view from the Clent hills, they were filled with wondering delight. In time wider excursions were accomplished: to Lichfield, the Wrekin, Malvern, Bridgenorth, and Gloucester, whereby they saw glorious architecture as well as grand scenery. So year by year they will visit all the noteworthy scenes available for a day's pleasure, relying on themselves for payment of the expenses.

The success of the Birmingham school silenced the objections, and, as regards secularity, the conviction grew that it was better to receive the half-crowns and shillings, than to let the coins remain in the pockets of those who might be tempted to waste their money during the day. The example has been followed in other towns, 'Friends' First-day Schools' have now

become an institution, and they comprise five hundred teachers and five thousand scholars. Better still; the desire to co-operate is spreading, and ere long every Quaker community will be helping in the work. Good will ensue in proportion to the actuating spirit, and to the recognition of the fact, that work and organise as we may, man cannot, after all, become greater than man; that he lives under fixed laws ordained by Him whom our Saxon sires of old so expressively named the All-father.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Birmingham—Ugliness and Ingenuity—Smoke and Shabbiness—The Jewellers' Quarter—The Pearl Button Quarter—The Dirty Quarter—Groups of Trades—The Gun-makers—Looking like Ladies—Tiresome Footways—Lawless Pedestrians—Grim Canals—Dartmouth Wireworks—Pungent Pickle—The Hot Mound—Stacks of Rods—Hand *versus* Steam—The Drawing—The Ripping Blocks—A Mile for Eightpence—Good Wages—Silver Wire Drawn through a Ruby—Prodigious Quantities Drawn—Use of Scraps—Annealing Pits—Steel *versus* Whalebone—The Pickle Tubs—A Noisy Barrel—Coiling and Packing.

BIRMINGHAM is a town of extraordinary contrasts: one or two good streets and a pleasant suburb, with an overwhelming mass of ugliness so dingy, black, and squalid in places, that a stranger's heart aches, and his eye grows painfully weary at the sight. Smoke darkens the sky and obscures the landscape for miles around, and the dead gloom contrasts strangely with the strong, eager life of the whole neighbourhood. Here are congregated nearly three hundred thousand inhabitants, comprising the busiest and most ingenious handicraftsmen that the kingdom can produce; and of all the contrasts here apparent the greatest is, perhaps, that between the ingenuity and its environment. In miserable workshops, and grimy holes and corners, results of industry are accomplished which seem little less than wonderful. The noise of hammer and file, of stamping-machines, of swift rollers and labouring

wheels, and mighty steam-engines, is heard in every quarter but that of Edgbaston, which is the Bayswater of Birmingham; and tall chimneys pouring forth their clouds of blackness, catch the traveller's eye from far.

It is for the most part a town of work-shops, and you may walk from street to street noting the change of aspect with change of trade. The jewellers' quarter looks clean and respectable; but go among the pearl-button makers, who have been somewhat 'put about' by the introduction of vegetable ivory, and you see less of cleanliness, and a suspicion of makeshift, while in the quarter where the ring of the anvil most prevails, you look in vain for cleanliness, and find nothing to admire except mechanical contrivances. A grouping of trades is noticeable; in one quarter the renters of steam-power, with their noisy and heavy operations; in another stampers and piercers, gilt-toy makers, makers of studs, swivels, and sleeve-links; then die-sinkers, lapidaries, rose-engine turners, spoon-and-fork makers, and chasers; a little farther, and there are the makers of coffee-pots, knobs, and handles, dram-flasks, game-bags, shot-belts, lamps, clock-cases, watch-hands, and so forth, trade after trade in what seems endless variety. You wonder how they all live.

The grouping is, perhaps, more observable in the gun-trade than any other, and, though at the risk of being tedious, we will exemplify by a paragraph. House after house, street after street, we see, Gun-and-pistol-makers — Gun-and-pistol-bag makers — Gun-barrel makers—Gun-barrel browners—Gun-barrel riflers—Gun-break-off fitters and forgers—Gun-breech makers —Gun finishers—Gun-implement makers—Gun-implement and barrel filers—Gun-lock makers—Gun-nipple manufacturers—Gun-rib forgers—Gun-and-rifle-sight

makers—Gun-stockers—Gun-stock finishers—Gun polishers—Gun-wadding makers—Gun-caps makers.

Walk from St. Paul's to St. Mary's, and thence to Gosta Green, you will see all this and more, and remark the generally gloomy character of the district. The difference in the appearance of the people of different quarters is as remarkable as that of their habitation. Here dirty and unctuous, there neat and even genteel. Work abounds for women as well as men, for many of the trades are light, suited to the touch of the female finger; or in sorting, wrapping, and packing, they find a ready resource. Some large establishments employ hundreds of women and girls, whose appearance is such, that a visitor from Lancashire remarked to his Birmingham friend, "Why, your factory girls look like ladies."

Conceited overmuch with its two or three prime streets, Birmingham is content with pebbled footways in all beyond, and very tiresome they are to walk on. Here and there occurs a patch of Rowley Rag in small blocks, smooth and level, looking well to the eye, but somewhat treacherous from slipperiness. Superadd to this the utter want of a street law for pedestrians, and you will imagine the inconvenience of walking about. Even in the busiest thoroughfares, the people swarm and straggle as if they were out for a holiday, or losing their way in a camp-meeting, making the difficulty of locomotion in London appear as pastime in comparison. Surely rectification of this annoyance would be as well worth the attention of the authorities, as a magisterial debate concerning the precedence of the mayor on public occasions.

By-and-by we come to Gosta Green, which for verdure may pair off with Hatton Garden: in an old

tract "Goestey Green" is described as the place where the first Methodist sermon ever heard in these parts was preached by an itinerant named Ball, in 1742; and hence we pass into one of the smokiest quarters, where great works and factories, for convenience of taking in coal and heavy raw material, and of sending away their ponderous merchandise, are built close along the banks of a canal. Some singularly imaginative persons have compared the scene produced with parts of Venice or of Rotterdam; but the sunshine of the one, and the cleanliness of the other are wanting, and the view must be regarded as a specimen of the ugliness with which Birmingham is afflicted. One of these establishments is the Dartmouth Wireworks, where, on presenting a letter to the Messrs. Cornforth, I am very cheerfully welcomed to a sight of the art and mystery of wiredrawing.

After a little talk about the habits of Birmingham workmen, who entertain, for the most part, a sincere respect for Saint Monday, one of the firm appoints himself as my guide. There seems something unpromising in first appearances as I follow him, for wiredrawing and cleanliness are not compatible. Under one of the sheds where men are lifting and shifting rusty coils of wire, there prevails a very pungent odour of pickling. The ground, white and dusty in places, looks as if it had just been abandoned by plasterers. Odds and ends of wire scattered about entangle your feet, and torment lady visitors who at times are tempted to view the works. Beyond the pickling shed rises a mound of brickwork, hot as an oven, and highly sudorific, in which appear a number of round openings, that might be taken for wells were they not so hot and dry. The height of the mound is increased by heaps

of wire-coils lying thereon to dry after a bath of uncertain whitewash. A little farther and there are larger heaps, not to say stacks of iron rod in coils, and a smith, whose forge is close by, taking a coil, heats one end red hot, hammers it for a minute on his anvil, then another, and another: in fact, does nothing else. A few paces to the left, and we see long benches on which flat iron drums rotate, winding off these rough black coils, under the charge of rough-looking men who seem as little able to keep themselves clean as brickmakers. And as all the machinery is driven by an eighty-horse engine, there is no lack of noise, to which a heavy-laden dripping wet barrel, rotating with ceaseless splash and sullen thump, contributes abundantly.

There is no mystery. That stack of coils was manufactured at the rolling-mills near Oakengates in Shropshire, which enjoy a reputation for iron rod of excellent quality: toughness being one of the essentials of excellence. Each coil contains from seventy to eighty feet of rod a quarter-inch in thickness, and all that art has to do is to reduce the thickness, increase the length, and maintain a proper temper. The reducing and lengthening are both accomplished at the same time by drawing the rod through a hole in a piece of steel called a 'draw-plate,' and through smaller and smaller holes in succession, until the required size is produced.

In the olden time, when handicraft had to trust to its own native resources, the wiresmiths, as they were called, hammered out all their wire on the anvil; and when they discovered that wire could be drawn, it was still drawn by hand. Where would the spinners of telegraph cables, and the wearers of crinoline steel find

themselves if steam were not now available to do the work better and a hundred times quicker?

The drawplate is a cylindrical piece of steel, of first-rate quality, about six inches long, and one inch thick, pierced from one side, which is flattened, by four or five conical holes. The small ends of the holes are carefully adjusted to the size of wire required; the plate is fitted into its place on the bench; the end of one of the coils, which has been tapered down as we have seen, by the smith, is thrust into a given hole, is seized by powerful nippers attached to a chain, and the strain is put on. Forthwith the wire is drawn through bright and smooth for a few feet; then released from the nippers, the end is fastened to one of the flat iron drums above-mentioned, and round this the whole length winds itself when no breakage occurs, in a continuous coil, bright, smooth, and burning hot by reason of the friction. The operation, though interesting to a stranger, is one dirty and laborious for the men employed at the 'ripping-blocks,' as this first series of drums is named; a name that carries our thought back to the time when the drum was really a block and made of wood.

There is a difference upstairs, where the smaller sizes are drawn. The work is less dirty, and instead of a man to a drum, one man attends to eight or ten drums; and there is something pleasing in the sight of the bright coils increasing every moment as they spin off, so to speak, the polished metallic thread. The smaller the wire the more readily can it be drawn: hence, while the rate down stairs is about 150 feet a minute, here it is from 300 to 400 feet, particularly with number 40, the finest of all. This is as delicate and almost as flexible as sewing-cotton. "How much

is it a yard?" inquired a lady who one day visited the works. "Suppose you calculate it," was the answer, "we sell a mile for eightpence."

The size and shape of the wire are determined by the hole through which it passes, and it may be drawn square or angular if required; but less satisfactorily than the round form. Perfection is only to be arrived at by attention to the drawplate, for the steel, however excellent, will wear away by use; the hole enlarges, requires hammering and punching from time to time to maintain the proper diameter. It is in attention to these particulars that one man will be a better workman than another; his wire is perfectly round, of uniform thickness, and free from scratches, and he may earn his four pounds a week, while the careless hand incurs all the defects, and earns but thirty shillings.

A tradition yet runs here and there in the trade that the best drawplates were formerly made in France, and sold for their weight in silver. But though steel suffices for all ordinary wire, something better must be used in drawing wire for philosophical purposes, and this is commonly a gem of hard quality. There is an instance on record of nearly two hundred miles of silver wire having been drawn through a ruby without any perceptible difference in its diameter from end to end.

The sizes are numerous; starting from 03 which is 112 yards to 112 pounds, while number 8—much in demand for telegraphs—produces 541 yards, and number 24 stretches out to 27,000 yards for the same weight. Here we may remark the extensibility of the metal: a wire drawn down to one-half its first diameter, becomes four times longer; nine times longer reduced to one-third; and sixteen times to one-fourth. Half-

inch is the largest size that can be drawn: it is used in the shafts of mines to guide the cage in ascent and descent, sometimes as much as ten tons of rod in a single shaft.

The quantity of all sizes drawn at these Works every week is from fifty to one hundred tons; it was invariably the highest amount during the preparation of the Atlantic telegraph. At present, owing to a freak of fashion, and the demand for crinoline wire, which is all steel, this amount is exceeded. Of the odds and ends that bestrew the premises, a ton or more is gathered up weekly and sold as scrap to the petty manufacturers of this busy town, who find uses for the whole. The iron wire is convertible into traps, cages, hooks, staples, and so forth, and the makers of light steel toys — packing-needles, awls, gimblets, and a variety of minor articles — show themselves clever economists of the scraps of steel.

On recrossing the hot brick mound, we are made aware that the wells are pits, about eight feet deep, in which the wire is annealed. Heated by a furnace underneath, the pits are filled with coils, and closely covered for twenty-four hours. Without this process the wire would not bear repeated drawing, or acquire the needful flexibility. For every drawing there must be a previous annealing, except for the small sizes, which will bear the strain without further persuasion from the fire. Another exception is the wire of which the springs are made for chair-seats, sofas, and other luxurious appliances; this is drawn without annealing to make it hard and springy, somewhat steel-like in fact, and can only be produced from rod of first-rate quality. Steel wire has commonly to undergo six courses of drawing and as many of annealing. One

kind of steel wire, light and pliant, is much in request for the ribs of umbrellas, and is sold at fivepence a pound to supersede whalebone, which costs more than £400 a ton.

To draw wire successfully it must not be too smooth, or, as the workmen say, it must 'bite' while passing through the drawplate, and this condition is arrived at by a coat of rust. The coils are first pickled by a dip into dilute sulphuric acid, whence the pungent smell, and from that into a bath of lime-water and flour, which covers them with a thin coat sufficiently rough for the purpose desired. The picklers earn from thirty to thirty-five shillings a week, and you will not think it any too much when you watch them at their heavy and disagreeable task. Piece-work prevails here, and all hands are thereby inspirited to exertion: a result which those stupid men who went on strike in London at word of command would perhaps think very objectionable.

Iron wire comes off bright and clean from its last drawing, ready to be wound into proper coils for export. Steel requires cleansing and polishing, and undergoes the process shut up with gravel and water in that rotating barrel which labours so noisily at its task.

In the warehouse we see a number of coiling cylinders at work, and heaps of wire ready packed, and bundles of tinned wire tied up in lengths to suit the bottlers of effervescing drinks. For export to Russia the coils are packed in casks, and the best kinds between layers of sawdust. Germany, less willing to pay for protection, is content to import wire wrapped in paper only. For home use much is sent away packed in bands of hay or straw, and large quantities without any packing at all.

CHAPTER XIX.

Birmingham—More Local Aspects—A Fashion for Chocolate—Double Houses—Right and Wrong in Back-Yards—Tumbledown Workshops—The Brooch-makers—A Polisher in Dismal Circumstances—The Workman's Household Gear—Cheap Kitchen Ware—Consumption of Wire—Inevitable Conditions—Hooks and Eyes made by Machinery—The Machines—All but Alive—Levers and Pegs—Cutting and Squeezing—The assiduous Beak-bender—Eighty a Minute—The Beak-planisher—Admirable Combinations—Three Hundred Gross a Day—Amazing Production—A Black Coat for Iron—Transmutation of Brass into Silver—The Packing Room—Happy Faces and Nimble Fingers—Tricks of Trade—Quick Counting—Cheap Sewing—Cheap Turning—Pushing for Orders—Brummagem Morality.

TAKING another walk, away from the principal streets, we notice that the houses are built double, one half looking into the thoroughfare, the other to the back-yard, which is common to the two. Alleys running between every pair of such houses are almost as numerous as front doors; and numerous as both are the name-boards, which, unlike the gay ultramarine and gold, so commonly seen in the towns of Lancashire and Yorkshire, make known the occupation of the inmates in local fashion, to which a chocolate ground is indispensable. The reason for this structural arrangement appears when we pass through some of these alleys and see the back-yards surrounded by 'shopping,' as the natives call the ranges of workshops, which are as essential to habitation here as conservatories in Tyburnia. Birmingham swarms with small

manufacturers, who, in this way, carry on their trade in convenient nearness to their residence, dwelling front or back according to inclination. Some prefer a back-house: "it's quieter you see, and comes a shilling a-week cheaper," said one to Temperans. Many of these back-yards exhibit industry in a pleasing aspect, so clean, and well kept are they, with trellis fences painted green, and flowers in narrow borders, and pretty climbers, all suggestive of domestic propriety. But far too many present you with a sight of work-shops, that look as if they ought to have tumbled down years ago, as if in fact they had been built for no other purpose than to tumble; and you wonder that men should trust themselves on such ricketty step-ladders and decrepid landings. As for the yards they have always been left to take care of themselves, and present examples of untidiness, with a rapid descent down to squalor, or to noisomeness, should there happen to be in one corner the heap known locally as the 'mixen.' It surprised me to see jewellers' benches in one of these shabby work-shops, for who could associate ornament with such a spot? Each bench is a rectangular cross, each arm fitted with a small vice, and gas-jet, thus accommodating three or four workmen, whose filings drop into a leathern apron that hangs between the arms. Here are made the brooches that carry stones larger than a half-crown, and are much coveted by prentices and nursemaids. The 'gold' is a metal manufactured in thin plates, from which the various forms are stamped by machinery, and all that the workman has to do is to attach the pins, polish the surfaces, and set the stones, and then sell them at prices varying from five to twenty-seven shillings a dozen. The stones are imported from Germany.

I once saw a polisher at work in one of the dismal 'power-shops,' under circumstances which struck me forcibly. Everything about the place was rough and dull: rough walls, rough ceiling, rough machinery, and a very rough earthen floor. He was the only occupant, and sat at his bench under the single window, polishing the bottoms of brass candlesticks on a circular brush, turned by a strap from the floor above. The brush, coarse as a besom, spun round with a snarl, flinging off the bespattering polishing-stuff as a halo of mud, and the man to protect himself therefrom wore an upper garment and cap of sackcloth. I watched him curiously, as holding a dozen bottoms in his hand to shield it from the heat developed in the foremost one by the friction, he kept on diligently at his task, apparently in fat heavy contentment, with work which to me seemed a grievous affliction. To me it appeared misery: to him it was daily bread; and I often think of him when listening to discontented lamentations.

We may ramble through miles of streets and witness similar conditions; and discover that the working-man likes to furnish his home with a circular three-legged table, more useful than ornamental, a clock, a chest of drawers, and a settee or sofa: these appear to be the prime essentials of the plenishing, and many a home looks very comfortable therewith. And there is almost everywhere that other assurance of comfort—a well-supplied cupboard. Take a stroll in Great Hampton Street, and at the numerous shops that there use the footway as show-room, you may study the prevalent taste in household furniture, and perhaps see some things of which you will be at a loss to imagine the use.

Then when returning through the streets where

sale, and not manufacture prevails, we note examples of cheapness which would amaze thousands of French rustics, whose lives are a makeshift, and who never heard a kettle sing. Here for threehalfpence you may buy a candlestick, a pair of snuffers for threepence, a fender for ninepence, a dozen saucepans for three shillings, a knife and fork for threepence, half-a-dozen nickel silver spoons for threepence; and what schoolboy would go knifeless where pocket-knives with two blades can be had for twopence a-piece?

We come to St. Philip's churchyard, the highest ground in the town, four hundred feet above the sea-level, which with its grass and trees looks pleasant amid the smoke. Thence we depart into another quarter of dingy streets, and gloomy atmosphere, to see one of the ways in which wire is used up by hundreds of miles. An alley leads us into one of the undecorated back-yards: a place given up wholly to work, unrelieved by the home-aspects which impart an air of cheerfulness to other rear-premises, whereof mention has been made. The inevitable old basket, the crippled joists and cracked boards, the litter-heap, and a sooty expression generally, betoken the supremacy of business over sentiment. A peep into a basement at the end shows us a steam-engine working with that resolute movement, which, though voiceless, seems to me as good as an exhortation; maintaining some manufacture that must be important if in proportion to the whirr and clatter of machinery heard overhead.

It will, perhaps, surprise you on ascending the stair to find a large room-full of machines making nothing but hooks and eyes.

Hooks and eyes! Who would think it worth while

to take so much pains over such very common-place things? A steam-engine, and elaborate machinery working year after year at such work as that! How can it ever pay? Surely one week's work will keep all England supplied with hooks and eyes for a twelvemonth!

When the confused feeling, occasioned by sudden entrance upon an overpowering noise, has worn off, we perceive that here is something well worth inspection. The machines standing in rows along the floor, may be described as heavy iron tables, about three feet in height, and furnished with so many moveable parts that you might almost fancy them to be alive—a maze of movements kept going by the steam-engine underneath, while hooks and eyes drop into boxes in a continuous stream; faster than the ticking of a clock. Description at first seems hopeless: however, let us try. Standing in front of one of the tables, we notice a coil of brass wire placed on a wheel, so as to be readily unwound: the free end of the wire is brought within reach of a vertical lever, the machine is set in motion, with a jerk to the right, the lever having seized the wire, pulls forward the exact length required for a hook or eye, as the case may be, then jerking itself back repeats the movement, and so keeps on, having nothing else to do but to bring up the supplies until the coil is exhausted. With two or three pulls the end of the wire has arrived at the middle of the table, where precisely at the right instant, the required length is cut off by a knife that springs forward for the purpose. No sooner is the cut made, than two steel pegs start up from the surface of the table immediately in front of the piece of wire, a small thin lever advances, gives a thrust against the centre of the wire, which,

met by the pegs, is pushed between them, doubling itself up into the form of a duck's bill, or beak as the makers call it. Squeeze the two limbs of a hair-pin close together, and you will have a representation of this stage of the process. The thrust leaves the two ends of the piece of wire pressing against the pegs, and the thin lever having retreated, a compound lever approaching on both sides at once, makes each end encircle a peg, and so forms the two little loops at the base of the hook. Now the pegs having done their duty for the moment, sink down into the table-top; a steel finger drops instantly upon the liberated beak, pushes it within reach of a small hinged flap, which keeps on opening and shutting with a curious jerking movement as if for pastime, and catching the beak, bends its extremity suddenly back, and so forms the hook, which immediately drops into the box beneath. Meanwhile all these movements have been repeated, another length of wire has been cut off and bent, and sent on to receive the final turn over. Another, and another, and another, with astonishing quickness, at the rate of about eighty a minute. So rapid is the succession of movements for the production of a single hook, that the eye follows them with difficulty; yet there is no confusion or delay, except at rare intervals, from the bending of the wire; and then the machine stops of itself until the impediment is cleared away.

There is yet a movement to be noticed. Orders are at times received for hooks with flattened or planished beaks; and this flattening is produced by the pressure of a compound lever, which is contrived so as to give its squeeze immediately after the bending of the hook by the busy little flap above-mentioned. Sometimes 'half-round' is preferred: it is all one to

the powerful lever. Thus from the pull of the first lever, to the squeeze of the last, there are seven several movements required in the shaping of a hook; and to see how each one takes place precisely when it ought to take place, and not otherwise, is to one whose days are not passed among machinery, as surprising as admirable. The inventor however talks about it as a mere matter of fact; he knows that certain primary movements are easily produced by machinery, and that new combinations of these are not beyond the reach of a patient thinker. And obedient to the Birmingham instinct, he retains the fruit of his thought, by having the machines made on his own premises.

In eye-making the movements are similar, except that the action is vertical, not horizontal; and that instead of a thin lever to bend the piece of wire between the pegs, a circular pin descends, giving the proper breadth and roundness. And so the untiring things go on, with two girls to mind them, from January to December, each machine making three hundred gross, or forty-three thousand two hundred hooks and eyes every day. Wherever do they all go to? is the stranger's inevitable question; especially as there are twenty manufactories of hooks and eyes in Birmingham. No fear of scarcity in this one place at all events; for I saw fifteen hundredweight of brass hooks, and half as many of iron hooks, waiting their finish in the storeroom; besides two tons of brass wire ready for working up.

It is remarkable after all that, notwithstanding the employment of complex machinery, and the amount of labour bestowed, the wire is still the principal item in the cost; so much so, that the price of hooks and

eyes varies with the rise or fall of a halfpenny a pound in the price of wire.

In the adjoining shop a number of girls are engaged in sorting and packing; but before passing thither the hooks and eyes have to undergo a course of treatment in the basement. Mere brass and iron when carried down, they are brought up lustrous with silver and japan. A hasty bath of thin varnish indues the iron with a respectable black coat, and thousands of the wiry things spread in layers on sievelike wire shelves, are dried in an oven. The japan is sufficiently light to prevent their sticking together in the drying, and when drawn from the oven they are ready for the market. In this method we have an instance of the improvement that can be made in an apparently insignificant manufacture. About ten years ago every hook and eye was taken from the varnish by children, and hung separately on racks to dry; a sticky and disagreeable task, which is now entirely avoided, while the article is rendered better and cheaper by the mere substitution of fluency for tenacity.

Chemistry comes into play in putting on the silver coat, and does it quicker than the varnish, though the process seems complicated. The coat is real silver, but of the very thinnest; for, from ten to twelve ounces of the precious metal are made to suffice for ten hundred weight of hooks and eyes: and in this manner. The man in charge puts a quantity of hooks or eyes into a dipper; that is, a small bucket of stoneware pierced with holes; dips them quickly into a pan of acid, which at once sets the metal into a state of active effervescence, and would soon consume it, but for the check interposed by immediate plunges into two or three other pans in succession, each more dilute

than the last, and a final bath of cold water. After this the hooks and eyes appear as clean and bright as new buttons, and are ready for their transmutation. They are thrown into a large earthenware pan, and sprinkled with white powder, which holds the silver in combination. The man stirs them briskly about with his hand, the powder disappears, as if absorbed, and the silvering is complete. All that remains to be done is to pour them out on a table of hot sawdust, which dries them quickly; then gathered up by a sieve, they are poured back into their box, a brilliant heap, and sent away to the packing-room, whither we will follow.

Birmingham can show many a scene such as we now witness—a number of young girls busily employed, and all clean and happy-looking. Here too we can find something to admire in the contrivances by which they economise time and accelerate work, and in their nimble expertness. Here are bushels of small paste-board boxes to be filled with hooks and eyes; and the counting, filling, tying, and labelling, go on with a celerity that seems too rapid for trustworthy results; and yet mistakes rarely occur. One label only in a gross is allowed for accident or waste. The labels are printed by the million, and are cut up in packets of two gross at once by a hook-knife; and the prevailing economy saves the petty clippings from the edges for sale at four shillings a hundredweight to the makers of papier-maché. The sticking on is done with a speed that would astonish the affixers of postage stamps. A girl having pasted a small board, takes a parcel of the labels between her thumb and finger, and runs off a row one by one upon the board with a dexterity that only practice could give, or the female

finger acquire. Thus pasted, the labels are picked off, but not so rapidly as they were laid down, and dabbed upon the boxes.

You need not be a conjuror to discover that mystifications are practised by makers of hooks and eyes as well as by diplomatists. Many a dress-maker buys "*Best Town made,*" as a genuine London article, or "*Dodge and Shavem's Superior Swan-bills,*" or any other among some thirty or forty names, little suspecting that the hooks and eyes which bear her favourite label were made up an alley at the back of a back street in Birmingham. It is the same with buttons, steel pens, knives, or spoons; the Birmingham manufacturer will stamp them with any customer's name. His own appears but rarely.

Though all this has taken long to describe, there is, as before stated, no slowness in the operations. It would be a triumph of literary craft could the description only be made as rapid as the work.

Economy of hand-labour appears also in the making of the boxes: you see sheets of pasteboard cut into strips, laid together, pasted, and pressed into the form of flat tubes, cut into lengths, and the ends folded down, ready for the tying,—all by machinery; and you may fancy that with things so light, the mechanism is only playing.

Much as is accomplished by the machinery, there is still sufficient left to employ a number of young women and girls, who earn from six to eleven shillings a week simply by filling, tying, and labelling the boxes. "I haven't thought it worth while inventing a machine to count hooks and eyes," said the master; "but it could be done." A machine could hardly count quicker than the girl who, drawing forward a quantity from the heap,

separates her three dozen before you think she has begun to reckon: certainly much quicker than by weighing. A quick hand will fill, tie and label, ten gross of boxes in a day. Clean and respectably clad, these workers are favourable specimens of the young women and girls of Birmingham: "ladies," as we heard them called in a former chapter. Besides the boxes, large parcels of hooks and eyes are sent into the market stitched on cards: this work is done by women at their own homes, and is not much more profitable than shirt-making. The pay for stitching on three thousand four hundred and fifty-six hooks and eyes is fivepence!

One place was mentioned to me, with a suggestion that there might be others, where the wages paid for 'turning'—that is, converting wire into hooks and eyes, was twopence for one hundred gross! Of course where the material constitutes the chief cost, attempts are constantly made to beat down the price. I heard of a manufacturer who having succeeded in beating down an enterprising wire-drawer, who 'pushed for orders,' made use of the success—if such it was—to extort an abatement of a halfpenny a pound from the regular house. The manufacturer's partner remonstrated against the proceeding as an unfair trick of trade, and was answered with "Tut, tut, man! 'tis a clear five hundred a year in our pockets." This species of Brummagem morality being found profitable in the money-making sense, is unfortunately too prevalent.

Should the objection be raised that my description includes too much of detail, my answer is that I wish to convey a notion of the ingenuity of this busy town as applied to minor objects, and as affording means of living to thousands of families who but for these minute operations would be paupers.

CHAPTER XX.

Birmingham—The Hardware Village—Topographical Features—Not a Toy-shop—Invention and Ingenuity—Ways and Means—"Pick 'em Out"—Free-and-easy Orthography—"Ain't come to that yet"—Scraps of Talk—Recreations: Music and Parks—The "Praty Street:" a Contrast—Battery Works—How to make Brass—The Foundry—Bars and Ingots—Cores—Rolling and Drawing—How Tubes are Made—The Hammers—Tremendous Din—Utensils made by Punishment—True Workmanship—Profitable Blows—In the Lathe—Negro Ware: Guinea Kettles, Lisbon Pans, and Neptunes—Brass Rods for Blacks—The Fetish—The Big Dog—Fire-irons—Shovel-pans and Ladles—Putting on the Bosses—Startling Reports—Filing and Turning—"A Tidy Power"—Annealing—A Cold Bath—A Lick and a Promise—Teetotal Trustworthiness—Polishing and Papering-up—Master and Men—Astonishing Cheapness—The Last Blow for Ladles.

BIRMINGHAM stands nearer to the sky than London by nearly twice the height of the Monument, on a gravelly eminence, and is not with all its defects an unhealthy town, of which a satisfactory proof has been shown in almost entire exemption from cholera. It never elected an M. P. till 1832, yet flourished nevertheless, and up to 1838 was only the biggest village in England—the 'hardware village,' as folk called it, with a high-bailiff and a low-bailiff for rulers, and an ale-taster and a flesh-taster among its functionaries. One characteristic of a village remains; not a roadway is paved in all the town. Denied a navigable river by reason of its elevated situation on the water-shed, it enjoys ample canal-privileges, and makes no boast of

the Rea, a little stream which, rising in the Lickey range, flows through the town, and by the Tame and Trent into the North Sea. During our Shropshire ramble, we crossed two or three brooks named Rea—a syllable found in the names of some of the rivers of Europe, and heard as *Ru* in the Alps.

There has been a fashion of calling Birmingham the 'toyshop' of the world, which interpreted by the popular signification of toys, is an unlucky misapplication of a term; for there is no other town in the world where so many really useful things are produced. The term might apply in the local sense, seeing that 'toys' is a trade technicality used to describe sundry useful articles: thus, fire-irons and stirrups are classed among 'heavy steel toys;' snuffers among 'light steel toys.' If the town sends its wares into all lands, so does it attract ingenuity from many nations, for whosoever has inventive genius may be certain of finding full employment for his talent, and handsome pay in Birmingham. Many a clever artificer or designer contents himself with five days' work in the week, having earned sufficient to enable him to take a day of recreation in addition to the Sunday. So numerous are the instances of invention and ingenuity, that you might almost believe the faculty begotten of mere residence. Mr. Wright, a surgeon of the town, now deceased, reading one day in Scheele's *Chemical Essays*, that the noble metals are dissolved by the *lixivium sanguinis*, was led thereby to make experiments which demonstrated the fact that cyanide of potassium will dissolve the oxydes of gold and silver; and from that demonstration originated the electro-gilding and plating which figure so largely in the trade of the town.

The individual instances of prosperity which have

come before us are corroborated by general aspects, for you cannot walk through Birmingham without perceiving that it is a place where the working-classes get enough to eat. Hucksters' shops, as they are locally called, abound; well-stored pie-shops betoken a lively demand, and the supplies of food imply a multitude of purchasers with whom good quality is a consideration. Struggle into the market-hall on a Saturday evening, and you will rejoice to see with what plentiful aliment Industry keeps itself alive, and will certainly be amused at the ways of the place. "Now, people, pick 'em out: pick 'em out," is the invitation to customers; and the customers accept with more or less of discrimination. How 'the people' like fruit is shown by the enormous quantities offered for sale, and of sorts which seem peculiar to the locality. A big pale strawberry, which is about as relishing at dessert as a turnip, is much in request. In autumn apples are brought by wagon-loads from Herefordshire; and if you are curious in pears, you will pause at the stall labelled DANGLEMS and BURGAMYS, and perhaps have to taste before you discover that the strange names are the Brummagem for D'Angoulème and Bergamot. In like manner Dusannes become JEWS'-HANDS, and Bon-chrétiens, BONG-GRECIANS, and in shops about the town, as well as in the market-hall. Another curiosity noticeable in its season is 'groaty pudding,' a compound which I have never yet had the courage to taste.

Thanks to railways, fish is not, as it used to be, a luxury in the midland counties. London can hardly show handsomer fish-shops than are to be seen in Birmingham, and 'the people' appear to be as fond of fins as of fruit.

"Now people, pick 'em out, pick 'em out," cried a

loquacious dealer, standing in the street by his stall of remarkably cheap fish, and evading the vigilance of the inspectors.

"Ain't come to that, yet," retorted a woman, passing with basket on her arm.

Listen to the talk as you go among the throng, and you will hear to have been troubled or worried expressed by, "I was so put about," followed, perhaps, by "I haven't overgot it." "Well, how are yow?" and "Well, good night," are phrases in which the prefix, Well, betrays a man of Birmingham wherever you meet him. "We had used" pronounced "ajuiced," and "You had ought," which spoken is "adaught," are also characteristic. "Yow adaught to bring a bigger basket, d'yow mean us to be clemm'd?" says a broad-shouldered artisan to his wife, doubtful of his supplies lasting till Monday morning; and signs of awkwardness will make him add, "Yow'll carry it gainer this way." Of an unhandy housemaid you may hear it said, "That wench ain't at all gain at her work." The master is always spoken of as 'the gaffer,' and another peculiarity noticeable in a walk through the town is that 'to set' is much used for to let; that houses are more often described as 'void' than empty, while for taxes the word is 'levies.'

The great Onion Fair is no longer the chief means of recreation for the inhabitants: popular concerts, to which the admission-charge is threepence, are held every week in the handsome Town-hall, and in a large public-hall built for musical purposes. Many of the working-people are good judges of music, and make it their chief recreation. Lord Calthorpe, who takes such praiseworthy care of the pretty Edgbaston suburb, has given thirty acres of level land on the

south of the town for a public resort, and now by a walk of about a mile from the Market Hall, 'the people' may enjoy a stroll about grassplots and shrubberies. North of the town, accessible by a short railway trip, is Aston Park, intended to be the Kensington of Birmingham, if the scheme can be realised which was set on foot when the Queen went down to the opening celebration. It is undulating and well-wooded, has a sycamore avenue and an old Tudor mansion, where Charles I. lodged for a day or two before losing the battle of Edge Hill. It is a pleasant spot when not darkened by smoke, and will be a memorial to posterity of the people's gain in recreative resources in the middle of the nineteenth century. As yet 'the people' need a little discipline, if an inference may be drawn from the caution posted in the grounds, against swinging on the branches, against the use of bad language and improper conduct generally.

From this view of ways and means, and recreations, we will turn to work, first taking a retrospective glance which will enable us to contrast the Past with the Present.

"I came through a praty street or ever I entred into Bermingham towne. This street, as I remember, is called Dirtey. In it dwell Smithes and Cutlers... The beauty of Bermingham, a good markett towne in the extreame parts of Warwikeshire, is one street going up along a meane hill by the length of a quarter of a mile. There be many Smithes in the towne that use to make knives and all mannour of cuttinge tooles, and many Loriners that make bittes, and a great many naylors. Soe that a great part of the towne is maintained by Smithes who have their iron and sea-cole out of Staffordshire."

So wrote Leland, learned and itinerant, leaving to us a glimpse of the town as he saw it in the reign of Henry the Eighth, and of its industry. Even then the trade had an ancestry. Those who "came over" with the Conqueror heard smiths at work on the slope of the gentle hill, and still the hammer sounds, and we may hope it will be heard in days when Norman blood shall cease to be a distinction. Dirtey is now Deritend, no longer "a praty street," as I once saw when on a walk to Henley-in-Arden and Stratford-on-Avon. Deritend is approached by Digbeth, a street that reminds many a one of good water and good beer; and it shall remind us, after our visit, of the Birmingham Battery Works, an establishment which makes its business known to the neighbourhood by a thunderous din. Battery, in this case, is to be understood in the laborious, not the warlike sense—as a place of battering, where blows and thumps are given, though not returned, in real earnest. Brass is the material thus unceremoniously treated by the aid of a mighty steam-engine, and from eighty to ninety men.

Having gained admission, we see first of all good store of the metals of which brass is made: great piles of copper ingots, tons upon tons, from the mines of Cornwall, and a great pile of zinc, spelter, as it is called, imported from Silesia. Lead and tin are also provided, being required at times in small quantity, as alloys. Combine two parts of copper with one part of zinc, and you have brass; but the copper must be melted first, as the zinc being a very volatile metal, would disappear in vapour if thrown in earlier than ten minutes before the casting.

We enter the foundry, and see a range of glowing furnaces, each holding a crucible made of Stourbridge

fireclay, about which a few men are busy; and in the floor a couple of square pits perhaps four feet deep, sunk for convenience of filling the moulds which, made of thick iron slabs clamped together, stand mouth uppermost along the sides. All being ready, two men lift a pot, as they call it, with big tongs from its bed of fire, and you see what endurance there is in Worcestershire clay, for the whole mass is at an intense white heat, and you feel its scorching glare at some yards' distance. The men, however, are as deliberate in their movements as if the temperature were agreeable; they knock off the cap of scum which has formed on the top, and pour the bright yellow molten metal into the moulds, until all the 'ready' pots are emptied. Then a man descends into the pit, knocks the clamps from the moulds, lifts off the upper half, and there appears a heavy bar of brass, about four feet in length, four inches wide, and one inch thick, this being the form most suitable for the further operations to which it will have to submit before leaving the works. But there are other forms of moulds; some short and thick, wherein are cast ingots of brass. Pipes too are cast in cylindrical moulds, around a core composed of sand and chopped hay, which can be easily broken out after the casting has cooled. There is an oven not far from the foundry where the newly-made cores are dried ready for use.

The bars here described are carried away to the rollers, and there converted into plates, sheets, and rods of any required thickness or thinness. The sheets intended for wire are cut up into narrow strips, and then finished by drawing in the same way as we have already seen at the Dartmouth Works. Tubes are also made by drawing a thick stumpy casting

through a series of dies, each smaller than the other, while at each pull a bright cylindrical rod is fitted to the interior. Wire-drawing is mere pastime in comparison with tube-drawing: for this the machinery is alike ponderous and powerful. The end of the tube is seized by an unfailing jaw, attached to a chain strong enough for a schooner's cable, which, wound upon a mighty roller, pulls the tube through the hole with resistless force, and, as with the wire, the length gains what the thickness loses. I saw tubes drawn in this way till they were twelve feet long and two inches in diameter, without a flaw, and smooth and bright inside and outside. Large numbers are made of these dimensions for the boilers of locomotives. Another way of making tubes is to bend a strip of sheet brass into a cylindrical form, and having drawn the edges as closely together as possible, to fill the crevice with solder, and pass the tube through a fire, which by melting the solder unites the edges, and completes the process by what is technically known as 'brazing.'

I could scarcely refrain from stopping my ears when led to the Battery, where three large hammers, moved by machinery, are smiting at the rate of five hundred strokes a minute, and with tremendous din. The hammer-head is wedge-formed, like a V, the thin end being the striking part. By each hammer sits a man, at the level of the floor, fashioning brass bowls, kettles, and pans under the noisy blows. Holding the disk of metal resting on the anvil, they begin from the centre, moving it gradually round and round until the bottom is properly formed, and the sides are worked up, and with such regularity from long practice that the impressions of the blows appear as a uniform spiral. The accuracy of the workmanship is indeed remarkable:

guided only by their eye, the men produce deep or shallow dishes and pans so truly circular in form that, although less than an eighth of an inch in thickness, they will bear finishing off by a chisel in a lathe. Were the circle not true the chisel would speedily find its way through the metal. It is the practice to lay three disks of the sheet brass together, maintaining their alliance by over-lapping the edge of one upon the other two as a hem, and by putting this threefold disk under the hammer, three pans are fashioned at once. Supposing an hour required for the operation, thirty thousand blows will have been administered in bringing the flat disk into proper shape. Poor battery-men! compelled to sit with their heads close to the hammers. Only by plugs of cotton in their ears do they preserve themselves from speedy deafness.

It may be that hammering alters the quality, for 'pan-brass,' that is, the metal of a tallow-chandler's old melting-pan, is in request by watchmakers. Some old-fashioned members of the trade in London, who study excellence of workmanship, always make their 'scape-wheels' of pan-brass, which is very hard, yet not brittle, and is worth a guinea a pound, for that particular purpose.

I saw a pan finished in the lathe, and as the bright shavings flew from the chisel, leaving the inside clean and smooth, could not but admire the accuracy of the battery-man's work. The finishing ceases at about an inch within the edge, leaving a margin and the outside in the condition in which the pan leaves the hammer: a style of finish adopted in compliance with negro taste, for brass pans are in great demand in Africa, and the natives prefer them finished as above described, the bright inner surface contrasting with the pale lively brown of

the outside. The lightness of the pans is such that a surprising number is required to make up a ton. They are packed six hundred together in casks, and exported to the West Coast at the rate of three or four tons every month.

The stock of pans in the warehouse seemed to me prodigious, piled up of many sizes, from the 'Guinea kettle,' three feet in diameter, down to a sugar-basin. Some, shallow and platter-like in form, are called 'Neptunes'; others are 'Lisbon pans'; and from the appearance you may guess which are for the negro market. The home supply is marked by a completeness of finish, and its columns of skillets and other utensils intended for the kitchen and laboratory.

Brass rods are as much in request by the negroes as brass pans, the one for ornament the other for use; though the rods are useful too, for they circulate among the tribes at the value of a shilling each. About the thickness of a lady's little finger, and in lengths of three feet, these rods are in great demand on the Coast, and are sent out in large numbers. So that they look yellow is the chief requirement on the natives' part as to quality; and with two or three dozen of the bright rods bent round their arms and legs they are proud as beadles on a procession day. No wonder that the heavily decorated negress whom Richard Lander saw fall from a canoe into the Niger never came up again. It is said that fetishes and idols have been manufactured in Birmingham for the African market; but I could not meet with any one qualified to tell the way to the manufactory. It may be that the manufacture is unintentional; for a relative of mine once travelling inland from Annamaboo, saw a 'Neptune' of the largest size at the foot of a tree,

which the natives had for many years regarded as a fetish.

Of other operations here carried on, it will suffice to mention the rolling of sheet brass and copper, in some instances of astonishing thinness; rolling of rods; drawing of small tubes, and wire; but the finest brass wire that can be drawn is coarse and clumsy in comparison with the delicate thread which we have seen produced from iron.

Economical contrivances are observable here as well as mechanical: large casks filled with clippings, shavings, and filings of brass, all to be re-melted and re-cast; others full of the scale which falls off the heated bars of copper, looking like flakes of iron rust; but sent to the smelting-furnace it will yield seventy-five per cent. of copper. And the sweepings of all the floors, heaps of black rubbish in appearance, are washed; and the washer having thrown off the dirt by his sleight of hand, there remains at the bottom of the trough a heap of glittering metal.

I went up an alley not far from the Battery into a back-street, and there up a court, where in a low range of workshops you may hear the ring and thump of hammers, the gnawing of files, the rumbling of lathes, and where, notwithstanding that the thermometer marked eighty-six, a big dog worried himself into a fury at my approach. Many a Birmingham master keeps his trade secrets by help of the big dog. The foreman came out, read my note, said, "Very glad to let ye in; but tisn't often that anybody wants to see fire-irons made;" drove Snarler into the kennel, planted his foot across to bar a sudden spring while I passed, and then I found myself exposed to the scorch of half

a dozen forges in full blast. "'Twould be worse if they were all going," said the foreman, "but some of our men have had to knock off 'cause of the heat."

Many a reader will remember having seen the coining-press in operation at the Polytechnic Institution, exerting powerful pressure by the swing of a heavy rotary lever. Presses of that kind render excellent service in Birmingham; cutting and stamping coins for home and foreign use, and everything that can be cut and stamped by such means, and the pans of shovels among the number. The pans are cut from strips of sheet iron at one blow, and after a quantity are so cut 'in the flat,' they are laid again on the machine, one at a time, by a girl, for the perforation of the ornamental pattern,—from the simple star which suffices for the cottager, to the elaborate fret-work that satisfies a squire; and a third blow impresses the hollow pan-like form. Besides shovel-pans, circular disks for ladles are cut out by the same machine.

Iron in rods and sheets is plentifully provided from the rolling-mills: the rods are taken in hand by the smiths, who cut them to the required lengths for pokers, tongs and the handles of shovels. The bosses and ornamental work are all formed in the first instance by the hammer. Wherever a boss or moulding occurs, there the rod is heated, and is wrapped round with a red-hot belt or collar, which is hammered into union. These prominences are re-heated; the smith places them between the two halves of a mould on the anvil, and the striker by a few blows with his heavy hammer impresses the form. The heads are fashioned in a similar way, but with a thicker wrappage and a larger mould, and that they may come from the hammer as

smooth as possible, means are taken, as the smiths say, 'to make them scale.' The head having been formed, is slightly re-heated: meanwhile a brush dipped in water is passed over the mould; then, no sooner is the head placed within it, and the blow struck, than—bang!—a report as of a pistol follows, and by this shock the roughnesses scale from the surface, and leave it in a fair condition for the finisher. The smiths turn this scaling to account as a practical joke, and sometimes when a timorous customer or a troublesome questioner comes to the open pane by the foreman's bench, they frighten him away by the startling report.

From the anvil the irons pass to the bench, where all the plain straight parts are filed up to a clean surface, and the bands, mouldings, and heads are finished in a lathe. There is no help from steam here; and as I stood watching the turner as he worked his own treadle and shaped the stubborn metal, the foreman said, "Ah, you see, it takes a tidy power to do that." Truly, it is no joke to make iron shavings fly by leg-power; but from beginning to end the making of fire-irons is very heavy work.

Then follows the annealing process: an oblong brick furnace about eighteen inches deep, built on the floor of an outhouse, is filled with fire-irons and leather-ashes in alternate layers; coke is heaped on the top, the fire is lighted, and left to burn from eight to ten hours. Then, while still hot, the irons are pulled out with tongs and thrown into a cistern of water, from which they are carried to a mill in another part of the town, and there polished with ironstone. "We only gives the cheap ones a lick and a promise," said the foreman, with a smile.

From the mill the irons are brought back to the smithy, where the pans are riveted to the handles, the loose legs of the tongs put in place, the ornamental drops screwed into the centre-piece; all of which is the foreman's work. "You see," he said, as we talked together, "that's my job. Master can trust me because I'm a teetotaller, and he knows that what I says I means. 'Twasn't so once, though. There's three more in the shop teetotallers besides me; but I does all the fittin' up."

It seemed like stepping into a cool atmosphere when we left the smithy for the warehouse, where the irons receive their final polish with 'putty,' and are 'papered-up' for sale, by women and boys. The foreman laying his hand on a vice near the window, remarked, "That's where master touches up any little fault that I have missed. Nothing goes out till he has looked over it." And here we have an example of a prominent characteristic of Birmingham—master and men working together. Besides the 'touching up,' the master in this instance undertakes the scorching task of drawing the annealing furnace, and tossing the hot irons into their bath. He happened to be out on the morning of my visit; but I thought him very satisfactorily represented by his foreman.

Sundry sets of irons were put before me for inspection, to make me aware that in brilliance, elegance of design, and all that constitutes a 'good article,' the hardworking little house is by no means inferior in taste or skill to houses great alike in extent and reputation. I was astonished at the low prices, even for the most highly-finished irons; and could come to no other conclusion than that retailers gain remarkably handsome profits.

One word about the ladles. The flat disks having been welded to the handles, and partially hollowed by a blow in the press, are then heated red-hot, and put once more under the press to receive the final blow that shapes them into bowls.

CHAPTER XXI.

Birmingham—The Bull Ring—St. Martin's—Barons of the Olden Time—Origin of Ugliness—Never too Late to Mend—Baskerville—Schoolmaster, Japanner, and Typefounder—Hutton, Priestley, and Watt—Four Acres of Glass—New Street—A Grecian Temple—The Jews' Merchandise—Leather and Fly-wings—How to make Iron Tubes—Red-hot Work—Buttons from Hoofs—A Reverse to the Picture—The Journeyman Gunsmith—How the Money Goes—Both Ways of Living—Autobiography—How to Abolish Poor-rates—A Screw Factory—Cutting the Blanks—Lathes and Hoppers—Heads, Nicks, and Worms—Self-action—Dirty Work—Cheapness and Civilisation.

We come forth into the street once more, and pursue our way to the Bull Ring, a spacious breathing-place on the brow of the hill where stands St. Martin's church, pointing sky-wards with tall spire, while around its base the noisiest traffic of the town passes ever to and fro. It was built in the thirteenth century, and contains curious tombs of some who were barons of Birmingham in the olden time, one of whom, John de Bermingham, has perpetuated his name and love of good architecture in the two western towers of York Minster. With these particulars in mind, we may be the more astonished at an occurrence to which the town probably owes its love for ugliness. In 1690, St. Martin's was converted from picturesque to churchwardenesque by a solid layer of brick over every part of the walls, from the top of the tower to the ground, when all the corbels and niches, all the mouldings, all

the tracery and lines of the windows, all the devices of the Decorated style, were effectually hidden by the heavy monotonous mask. The inhabitants seem to have relished the outrage, for afterwards, when building new houses, ugly St. Martin's was the style adopted, even to the very curve of the window-heads, and the practice was continued down to within the present century. Hence, as it seems to me, the overwhelming prevalence of the Despondic style throughout the greater part of the town. However, it is never too late to mend, and as the tower and spire of St. Martin's are now restored in the original style, we may hope that nave and aisles will soon appear in equal beauty.

That eminent typographer, Baskerville, once taught a school, here in the Bull Ring, before he began to achieve fortune as a japanner, and fame as a type-founder and printer. The house which he built for himself, on Easy Hill, is now a factory. When Charles Wesley came to Birmingham in 1742, it was here that he preached. "He planted himself in the Bull Ring near the Old Church. As soon as he began, the people set the bells a-ringing, which drown'd his voice, and prevented him from being heard at any great distance. He continued his preaching till the mob began to pelt him with dirt, turnips, &c." A churchman of the day reporting on this visit says: "It is very probable that when once the Methodists have lost the recommendation of novelty, they will dwindle to nothing in Birmingham."

Here in Birmingham, William Hutton lived a meritorious life, and showed that even a fortunate bookseller may be happy. Here Priestley widened the field of chemistry and electricity, discoursed of philosophy, and suffered from the brutal violence of a mob; and

in the northern outskirts, Matthew Boulton and James Watt brought the mighty power of steam into subjection, and multiplied a thousand-fold the working power of mankind.

A little farther up and we come to the handsome market-hall, and to the four acres, all roofed with glass, where the trains of the London and North-Western Railway, and of all the narrow-guage lines, shriek and roll from day-dawn to midnight. A little farther and there stretches the lively New Street, the Regent Street of Birmingham, its lower end set off by King Edward's Grammar School, its upper end terminating against the town-hall, a Greek temple with rows of columns, pediment, and portico, standing on a rustic basement: a handsome building, in which you may see how mistaken are they who claim to rank Grecian architecture as picturesque, shutting their eyes to what our old churches and cathedrals affirm to the contrary. It seems to me that a Grecian temple, with its stiff hard outlines, can only become really a thing of beauty by lapse of twenty centuries, with free play the while to weather and ruin.

By a few ins and outs during this walk, we see that fancy articles, beads, jewelry, and things attractive to the eye, are the merchandise in which the Jews of Birmingham most delight: not fruit and clothing. And we discover that the town is skilful in light and pretty wares, as in heavy things of brass and iron. The trade in 'leather goods' is considerable, and in one of the streets near St. Martin's we may see a machine at work which splits sheepskins, making one into two, at the rate of twenty dozen a day; and note the way in which they are dyed of many colours, and grained and polished and diced by rubbing with box-wood rollers.

The thinnest are called 'fly-wing skins,' and so thin are they that you can see through them to read a newspaper: they are used for the covering of jewel-boxes, and articles that require a close fine joint.

A mile west of the town-hall, we can see a process of making iron tubes, which is the more interesting after what we have seen at the Battery. The factory is hot and noisy, and echoes with loud reports, as from volleys of pistol-shots. Strips of plate-iron are cut to uniform width, are made red-hot, and partially beaten into the form of a tube, are re-heated to a white heat, drawn quickly out of the furnace to a mandril formed by concentric wheels, are pulled rapidly through, and thereby become perfectly-formed cylindrical tubes, so completely welded that no sign of a joint is discoverable. It is in the pulling through that the sharp reports occur, from the same cause as that in operation among the fire-irons, the scaling of the metal by contact with water. The process is as expeditious as it is effectual, and tubes can be made by hundreds a day, fit for use in steam-boilers, or for any other purpose requiring strength and durability. The men earn good wages, but in a fearful heat, while the work demands rigorous attention, for red-hot iron will not be trifled with, and must have quick and sure manipulation.

I am not taking you, reader, to the places which are regarded as the show-manufactories of Birmingham, because those which we have visited, and may yet visit, appear to me more interesting. To see such ingenious contrivances applied to the production of merely useful things, fills the mind with a pleasurable surprise, and teaches us that there is nothing so common that it may not have happy relation with intellectual power and mechanical skill. Your Birmingham

artificer will take the hoofs of cattle, unsightly objects, treat them for a while with hot-water, and then stamp them into buttons, which a duchess or a dairy-maid might be proud to wear.

But we must not deceive ourselves with the notion that Birmingham is a model town, for the discipline of workshop and factory, the good-humoured aspects of Saturday night, the improving influences of concert-room and lecture-hall, have a reverse in scenes of drunkenness, lewdness, and riotous waste. Severe labour and high wages are strenuous provocatives of dissipation.

Our walk leads us once more among the gunsmiths, where in one of the gloomy streets we call on a journeyman gunlock maker, who is an intelligent specimen of his class. After a few remarks about tools and workmanship, our conversation takes a turn with the inquiry, "Which should you think is the poorest and worst paid trade in Birmingham?"

"Well, I dunno as any trade in partic'lar is very bad: most trades makes good money jest now."

"But how is it so many poor-looking people are seen about the streets, and so many houses look dirty and poverty-stricken."

"Yes, but 'taint 'cause people are bad off, so much as 'cause they dunno how to spend what they gets properly. Many a one gets more nor I do, a many fifty shillin' a week, as ha'n't got a penny to bless theirselves with by Wensdays or Thursdays."

"What do they do with their money?"

"Do? 'tis easy to say what they does with it—a treatin' everybody at the public-house o' Saturday nights, a little bit o' gamblin', and often a precious blow out Sundays and Mondays. Then there's lots

on 'em as don't work above half a week, so don't get so much by half as they might. Often them as earns the most seems the wo'st off. Every pint o' ale as some of 'em drinks cosses (costs) sixpence, 'cause o' the time as is lost."

"Then in your opinion there is not much real poverty in Birmingham?"

"I b'leeve a very little collected among the working-classes 'ud relieve all the real poor, sich as labourers sometimes out o' work, widders and orph'ns, and sich like, without that great place at Winson Green (the workhouse); and there needn't be no poor rates if everybody was sober and industrious. From what I know of what men 'll do for one another, I'm sure they could do all as is necessary for one another, if they on'y chose to try. I've tried both ways o' livin', and I know all about it."

"What do you mean by both ways of living?"

"Well, you see, me and my brother was brought up reg'lar bad. Father was a good workman, and I've know'd him earn four pound of a sober week, but he never give us no learnin' wo'th speakin' of, and our house wasn't fit for anybody to come into. He spent so much money, and idled away his time so, that sometimes mother haven't had the value of a loaf of bread, nor enough to buy a Sunday's dinner; so she went to work at a screw-factory, and we four children done jest as we liked; and when I was nine, father took me to help him at the works. He might 'a rode in his carriage a'most if he'd on'y a bin a sober man. He died quite a old man at forty-seven, and mother was better off without him than with him. I soon left home after I was fourteen, and got lodgin's, and went on bad enough for 'ears; lost time every week, and

didn't care for nothin' till I was about twenty, when I kept company with the young 'ooman as is my wife, and she says I'll never get married till you are stiddier, and begins to save a bit; and she could read and write. I couldn't hardly read: so says she, 'and why don't you learn to read?. A man ain't nothin' as can't read, let alone writin'; so I went to Severn Street School, and that was the means o' my bein' stiddier, and now I don't want for nothin'. I puts by five shillin' a week, and don't miss it. Some o' my old acquaintance calls me a dull, slow sort o'customer, but I know how to enjoy myself. I got my garden; that's al'ays a pleasure; and last summer me and my wife, and the children, went to Warwick and Leamin'ton: we see all over Warwick Castle, and never enjoyed nothin' more in our lives. It cosses a smart bit o' money to go out with three or four children; but not much more'n I've often spent on myself in a week's spree. Then I had a week myself at the Isle o' Man, and this 'ear, I mean goin' to Wales. Then you see we don't want for nothin' here at home, and things goes comfortable like with us."

This simple tale here repeated in the words in which it was told is a striking example of the two ways of living. It illustrates, too, one of the now habitual recreations of the people, who more perhaps than those of any other town, indulge in railway trips, and holidays in picturesque places. Happily there are many in Birmingham who, if questioned, could tell a similar tale. One single class in the Severn Street School have saved among them more than a thousand pounds, which is a good beginning towards a practical application of the notion that the working-classes may live entirely independent of poor-rates.

Let timorous legislators take courage, there is a wholesome leaven at work among the six-pound householders. If the leaven should rise into the class that produces the men whose use of wealth is to bribe their way into parliament—the respectable clerk who embezzles his employer's thousands—the contractor who cheats the government and robs the nation—the overland travellers who play the fool under the roof where Mohammedans worship—if it should rise into this class, so much the better. There is some hope of the social pyramid which grows broader and stronger at the base.

In the making of hooks and eyes we saw one reply to the inquiry—What becomes of all the wire? Let us now walk to a street near St. Bartholomew's church and see another, not less insatiable: the manufacture of screws. If I may take it for granted, diligent reader, that you are already familiar with the form and appearance of a screw, my attempt at description will be the easier. The wire used is of various sizes, such as we saw drawn at the Dartmouth Works; and the process begins by cutting up this wire into 'blanks,' that is the pieces which are to be converted into screws. The machine for this purpose, which involves a sudden and heavy shock, is erected on the solid ground, and in common with all the machinery of the establishment is driven by steam.

As with the hooks and eyes, the coil of wire is drawn forward by regular pulls to a small iron box, inside of which, and out of sight, the required length—say two inches—is cut off at one stroke, and placed with one of its ends projecting from the front of the box, immediately facing a horizontal ram. The ram starts

forward, strikes the end of the piece of wire, and compresses it at one blow into the conical vent from which it protrudes, and thereby forms that which ere long will be the head of the screw. The blank then falls into a box, and gives place to another length of wire, and so the operation continues. Blanks of the largest size cannot be prepared in this way; but must be heated red-hot, and hammered into shape.

From this machine the blanks are carried up stairs to a noisy workshop; an angry noise, irritating to an unaccustomed ear, for the place is filled with row upon row of iron lathes, all spinning, rattling, and roaring as if enjoying their work. At first, what with noise and multiplicity of movements, the scene is somewhat puzzling: things like a bricklayer's hod, made of iron, rise above the lathes, and wherever anything whirls there a thread of what looks like dirty water flows upon it from a tin reservoir, and women and boys, all remarkably dirty, are working as busily as the machines. Screw-making in fact is a very uncleanly trade; and it is not here that we must look for specimens of the ladies. We shall admire the ingenuity of the machinery nevertheless, for it makes screws with the least possible assistance from human hands.

The hod-like things are hoppers, all filled with blanks, which are continually sliding out at the mouth, as grain from the hoppers of a grist-mill, and all vibrating with the rapid action of the lathes to which they are attached. As the blanks slide out they drop between the slender bars of a railway, which curves gently down from the hopper, and there hanging by their heads are shaken gradually downwards, in continuous Indian file, by the ceaseless tremor. As soon as the foremost blank arrives at the lower extremity of

the railway, it falls into a little cradle which opens to receive it, darts instantly forward, and presents it to an open jaw, which closes upon it, spins rapidly round, while the two halves of a cutting tool advancing at once from each side embrace the head for two or three seconds, then retiring leave it smoothly shaped; the jaw opens, the blank falls into a box, and another is instantly thrust forward to undergo the same operation; and so from five hundred to six hundred heads are shaped every hour. At times a hitch occurs in the descent of the blanks; but there is no pause in the movements below, and it is curious to see the several parts as busy empty as full.

The next operation is cutting the nicks across the head. Carried to the hopper of another machine, the blanks travel down as before, and as each one arrives at the bottom of the slope, it rests for an eye-wink while a small circular saw advancing to meet it, cuts the nick at one stroke, and keeps on nicking at the rate of forty gross a day. Then comes the final operation, that which converts the blank into a screw —the cutting of the worm; and this is done by an embrace of the die or cutting-tool, as in the shaping of the head. Now the screw is finished, and will presently be carried away to the warehouse.

Before these self-acting machines were invented—two or three years ago—each lathe required a woman or boy to work it. Now one woman attends to half-a-dozen lathes, having nothing to do but keep the procession of blanks in regular movement, and the supply of soap-water properly regulated. Wherever a cutting-tool works, there the slender stream falls without intermission to keep the metal cool and diminish friction; and for this purpose soap-water is

more suitable than oil. Hence all the working parts of the lathes are sloppy and greasy, and the women and boys to match: as dirty as lockmakers. And the wages are to match; from eight to ten shillings a week. The amount appears small; but while screws are sold to the retailers at less than sixpence a gross, how is it to be increased?

The invention of self-acting mechanism for screw-cutting is one of the consequences of keen competition; and the same cause will inspire ever new improvements in the machinery, all tending to more rapid production. The invention, though a success, is still in its infancy, with a future before it full of promise. Besides the home competition, the French and Belgians have to be encountered, for they undersell the English manufacturer in his own market. Success to the best workmanship. No fear for England if she will but be as honest as she is skilful; remembering that cheapness is an element of civilisation, as Chenevix says, and "that the bent of civilisation is to make good things cheap."

CHAPTER XXII.

Birmingham—Steel-pen Works—An Agreeable Change—Busy as Bees—Steel Lace-work—Preparing the Steel—Cutting the Blanks—Good Work for Women—Fifteen Minutes' Tea-time—Twenty-four Varieties—Stamping the Names—Pressing Blanks into Pens—Twenty-four Hours of Polishing—The Slit—The Tempering—Scorching Work—The Colouring—Blue or Bronze—The Grinding—Trying the Nibs—Happy Combination of Ingenuity, Economy, and Cleanliness—Four Hundred Tons of Pens a Year.

To visit Hincks and Wells' steel-pen factory, a large and handsome red-brick building, situate in an open thoroughfare near the Jewellers' quarter, will be an agreeable change after so much as we have had of black and sullen streets and ugly alleys. While the building exhibits somewhat of architectural effect, the tall circular chimneys testify that steam-engines of no trifling power are doing all the heavy work of the establishment. And our expectations as to the amount of work are raised at once to a high pitch, when, having mounted the stair, we enter the warehouse and see the prodigious quantities of pens in sacks, and in boxes of wood and pasteboard, all finished and ready for sale.

A few paces farther, on the same floor, and we are in a large room, where sit perhaps a hundred women and girls, busy as bees, each working a small stamping-press; cutting, as it seems, long steel ribbons into lace-work. To understand properly what they are doing,

we must bear in mind that large sheets of steel are made at Sheffield, and brought hither, where they are cut into strips, are rolled up, put into pots, softened in a furnace, or muffle, and are then passed between heavy rollers till of the requisite thinness, and what that is anyone may ascertain by examining a steel-pen. The strips come from the rollers in long bright and flexible ribbons, and are handed over to the women; and now let us see what is done with them.

The room is traversed by benches, supporting rows of small stamping-presses, the levers of which are vertical, descending within convenient reach of the hand. A girl takes a ribbon, lays the end on the die, gives a quick pull at the lever, and a pen-shaped blank is forthwith stamped out: and then with a continuous pushing forward, accompanied by a rapid succession of pulls at the lever, and a reversal of the ribbon on arriving at the farther end, the entire length is pierced by a double row of blanks, the points towards the centre. The perforated slip is left of a curious pattern, varying with the shape of the blanks, and may be described as steel lace, some of it pretty enough to tempt a blacksmith's wife. A girl who knows how to make the most of her time, will cut out three hundred gross of blanks, more than forty thousand a day; and earn from twelve to fifteen shillings a week. The hours of work are from eight to seven.

The making of steel-pens depends so much on light stamping-presses and sprightly fingers, that it ranks with the most desirable of what is called "female employments," being neither dirty nor laborious. It is a pleasing sight to pass from room to room of these large works, and see four hundred women and girls intent on their tasks, all clean and properly dressed,

and many of them remarkably good looking; no wonder Lancashire took them for ladies. Even the youngest earn from five to six shillings a week. In the course of my visit the bell rang to notify the quarter-hour for tea, which created a bustle round the stoves where the water was boiled, while the thump, thump, thump, of the many presses ceased, and gave place to the murmur of voices as the groups dispersed from the stoves and took their refreshing cup. A good number descended into the yards, and stood chatting at the foot of the stairs, or occupying themselves with a little bit of needlework, till the bell recalled them to their presses.

Twenty-four different forms of blanks were given to me as specimens, and these did not include all the varieties. Some appeared to me to be merely fanciful, by way of tickling customers with an appearance of something new, while they write no better than the simple, and, as we may say, the natural form. Some have the shape of a hand, with the index finger to serve as nib; others are pierced to resemble a face, and are very good imitations of a schoolboy's portrait of the full moon; but for the most part the differences are minute, and consist in the depressions, cuts, and punctures, which impart flexibility to the metal.

A lively clatter salutes our ears as we enter the room where the names are stamped. Imagine a number of little pile-driving machines with the rams rising and falling as fast as they can be pulled, and you will have a notion of what is going on. The heel of the blank is laid on the small steel cube at the base of the machine, down comes the ram, and the name is stamped. The ram is raised by a line which passes through the bench to a stirrup, in which the girl places her foot to give the pull; and so quick are

her movements, that the clatter seems to run round the room in a continuous roll. The names impressed are more often those of wholesale or retail traders, than of the real manufacturers.

Then into another room, where more women and girls and a battalion of stamping-presses are pressing the flat blanks into pens; one squeeze sufficing to give the hollow form with the fluting and convolutions which vary the pattern. Barrel-pens require two strokes to make the cylinder complete.

As yet we have only the appearance of pens, for the slits are wanting; there is a sharp roughness too about the edges, and the brightness is dimmed by frequent handling. The next process is therefore one of smoothing and polishing by steam-power, in which bushels of pens are turned round and round in barrels mixed with grit and water, from ten to twenty-four hours: the longer time for those which have most indentations. When taken out of the barrels they are dried in sawdust.

Then follows the cutting of the slit in a small press, which cuts with two edges, as a pair of scissors. Then the tempering, or hardening—a distressingly scorching operation. A number of cast-iron vegetable dishes, as we may call them, are warmed on a stove; are filled with pens, then, with their covers on, are put into a furnace and heated red-hot. At the proper moment the furnace-man draws out the boxes, and tosses the glowing pens into a large pan of train-oil, from which, if all have gone well, they emerge with a temper acceptable to writers in all parts of the civilised world: even in Turkey, for has not Albert Smith recorded that he saw a Mussulman selling steel pens in the streets of Constantinople?

The colouring of pens either blue or bronze is a process somewhat like that of coffee-roasting; they are put into cylinders and turned by hand over a fire till the desired colour is produced, simply by the action of heat. The blue colour appears in about twenty minutes; the bronze later. And now that the tempering is complete, the pens are taken to the grinding room, where the points are finished one at a time upon fine-grained grindstones, throwing off the while such cloud-like streams of minute sparks as seemed to me a good representation of the tail of a comet. The cross scratches that promote flexibility, and the bright stripes round the barrels of the bronze pens, are also put on by a touch of the grindstone. Then comes the examination by a party of women, who try the nibs on a guard worn on their thumb; and they reject all which are imperfect. We may however believe that they are not very rigorous over the pens which sell at three-halfpence a gross.

The pleasure derived from the view of ingenious mechanical processes is enhanced in this establishment by the order and cleanliness that everywhere prevail. There seems something really cheerful in the large rooms where the light handwork is carried on; and if we go among the men who assist the steam-engines in doing the heavy work, and notice their economical methods, and the heap of perforated ribbons waiting transport to Sheffield, there to be reconverted into sheets of steel, we see the happy results of systematic control.

What becomes of all the steel pens? seems a question more difficult to answer than that as to the fate of hooks and eyes, for Birmingham uses up from eight to nine tons of steel every week in the pen-manufacture—

more than four hundred tons a year. Of this quantity three tons a week are converted in the establishment which we have just had the pleasure of visiting.

In the article of steel pens, it seems to me that the public do get the advantage of cheap production; but in ironmongery, too much of the advantage appears to be intercepted by those who are only retailers.

As my sight-seeing in Birmingham has now come to an end, I here repeat my thanks to each and all of the manufacturers who so kindly favoured me with a sight of their works, and set no bounds to my inquisitiveness, and cheerfully promoted my desire for knowledge. And here I thank beforehand those whom I hope to visit in other places.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Trip to Smethwick—Plate-glass Works—The "Ingrediments"—The Furnace—Fearful Spectacle—Filling the Pots—The Casting-Shed—Ovens and Apparatus—Drawing a Pot—The Test—Striking Effects—Outpouring of Fiery Paste—Rolling—The Glowing Plate—Into the Oven—Two Days of Cooling—Beer better than Water—Good Habits promoted by Fair Play—Drawing the Ovens—Squaring the Plates—From Fire to Water—The Grinding-Shed—A Mad Dance—Sand and Water—The Smoothing-Shed—Women's Work—Good Wages—Good Looks, Good Workmanship—Many Women, more Ventilation—The Polishing Shed—Red Machinery, Red Men, Red Boys—The Cutting-Room—Glass Floors—The Emery Mill—The Plaster Oven—The Machine Shop—Getting rid of Refuse.

SOME three miles towards the Black Country, along the Stour Valley railway, and we come to Smethwick—Smithy Village—a place which teems with tall chimneys and smoke and their noisy accompaniments, and enjoys a full share of canals with their ins and outs, and a sunken boat or two which, as it appears to me, must be left peering above the dirty water, as mementoes to boats still in the vigour of existence. Amid all this lies the domain of the *Birmingham Plate Glass Company*—seventeen acres, of which nine are occupied by buildings and working yards; and the remainder will ere long be similarly covered, if the demand for plate-glass continues to increase with the same vigour manifested ever since the exceedingly stupid and unfair restrictions imposed by the Excise on the manufacture of glass were removed. To me it

seems wonderful that a large body of manufacturers should ever have consented to obey laws that outraged every principle of common-sense, and consequently of common justice.

We have timed our visit so as to arrive when the casting begins, an interesting operation at all times, but most so when seen in the sober twilight of an October evening. Then the pouring out of the liquid fire, and the intense gleams from the furnace, appear awful in the gathering gloom.

That extremely learned schoolboy, so often quoted by reviewers, knows full well what are the materials of which plate-glass is composed, and is ready at any moment to enumerate sand, an alkali containing soda, nitre, lime, a certain quantity of broken glass, and a small dose of manganese; the latter, to kill the green colour, as the workmen say. The sand is brought from two different places within one hundred and fifty miles of Birmingham; but there are some manufacturers who consider that good glass cannot be made except with sand imported from Fontainebleau.

The sand having been well washed to get rid of impurities, the 'ingrediments,' as I once heard a Birmingham glass-blower call them, are carefully mixed and conveyed to the furnace, which is a huge cone of brickwork, gorged with fire, and roaring in a way that may enable you to imagine the mouth of a volcano. You will start back from the frightful glare when the doors are opened, showing the interior all at an intense white heat, and a row of enormous crucibles —pots the men call them, standing within the mouth, quivering and glowing like all the rest. You could not desire a better example of the stubborn nature of Stourbridge fire-clay, and its defiance of conflagration.

I made the same inquiry here as in other places, as to the duration of the fire; but not one had been alight long enough to breed a salamander: namely, seven years, as was believed in days of eld. You would think that no one could go near that inferno and live; yet the men, handling their spades expeditiously, throw the material above-described into the pots, till each is filled with its allowance of nine hundredweight. Then the doors are shut, and the fierce fire is maintained for fourteen hours: so long does it take to melt the sandy mixture.

The casting is about to begin. We are in a large, gloomy shed where, along each side, appear the mouths of annealing ovens. Against one of the mouths stands a large oblong iron table, moveable on wheels, its top warmed by boxes of fire placed underneath, and its smooth surface level with the bottom of the oven. At one end rests a large iron roller connected by a chain-tackle with a windlass at the other, which when in motion runs upon a bar of iron about half an inch thick, placed near each side of the table. According to the thickness of the bars so is that of the plate.

At sound of the foreman's whistle, his party, all well drilled to their several tasks, betake themselves to their posts. There is no confusion; no shouting; indeed scarcely a word is spoken, for each knows what he has to do. The furnace-doors are flung open; a wheeled crane bearing a large ring at the end of its arm, is thrust forward, and one of the pots being encircled thereby, the men drag it away to the shed. Even at four yards distance we find its scorching glare intolerable, inspiring a sense of dread. When near the table two men, who stand ready with scoops, and wear goggles to protect their eyes, skim off the

impurities which rise to the surface of the molten mass, and one then dips out a scoopful as a test. Meanwhile the glare spreads around, illuminating the dusky walls in strange patches, streaming on the earthen floor, and penetrating to the sombre span of the lofty roof. And there stand the men in expectant attitudes, awaiting the signal, their faces glistening in the glare, composing many a striking effect of light and shadow, and varied emotion.

The foreman examines the test through a hand-screen of smoke-coloured glass. He beckoned me to approach; and I saw what may be described as a ladle-ful of red-hot boiling paste, across the surface of which gleams of colour played as on the sides of a dying dolphin. The foreman having satisfied himself as to the quality, the pot is lifted by a crane, brought over the table, when the men seizing the long projecting handles from each side, give a swing to and fro, and, tilting at the exact moment, the fiery paste is poured out immediately in front of the roller. At once the men at the windlass begin to turn; the roller moves, spreads out the paste before it, till it covers the whole table between the bars, and having travelled the whole length of the table, it stops at the windlass. How the great red-hot plate seems to quiver still, for now a blush, now a paleness, now a cloud passes across its surface, and gleams of surprising hue. It appears leathery in consistence as a man passes an iron 'sword' under its outer end, while some five or six others lifting a gigantic peel, pass it under the end of the plate just raised, other men seize the ropes attached to the long handle, and at the word "pull altogether," the plate is driven into the oven, and there pushed to the farthest corner, for each oven will

hold four plates. Forthwith another pot is brought and another plate cast, and when the oven has received its charge the mouth is stopped, and the whole left to cool gradually for two days. By this slow cooling the plates are annealed, and brought into the condition which such glass requires to make it useful.

The men having filled the oven walk off to another shed equally large—the furnace standing at the junction of the two, and there repeat the same operation; and very laborious work it is. What with the scorching and exertion, you see them streaming with perspiration. Of course they must drink to make up for the waste; and here they choose small beer in preference to ale; and in cases of overwork, when an additional allowance is granted them for ale, they still choose the weak liquor. It appears to be incontestable that water will not suffice for such a condition as theirs; they must have beer in some form; finding in the slight bitter flavour and gentle alcoholic quality, a sustenance and satisfactory quenching of thirst, which fail in the pure element.

The managing Director, for whose courtesy and intelligent explanations I am much indebted, spoke very favourably of the men. Drunkenness is not one of their faults, and they submit to the needful discipline. The better, perhaps, because they recognise a spirit of fairplay in the treatment they receive, seeing that when the casting is good, they are told of the fact, and are not made acquainted with the bad only. Much depends on proper melting, and the word of praise excites the melters to do their best. "We can tell by looking at the test what the plate will be," said the manager: "to-day all have turned out well, and the foreman will take care that the men shall know it."

At the drawing of the ovens a man crawls in and passes a hook attached to a long rope to the end of each plate in turn: they are then hauled out upon the table and squared, the rough imperfect margin being cut off by a diamond. As the thing sought is a perfect plate, the pieces cut off are in some few instances a foot in width; they are, however, not wasted, but are broken up and mixed with the supplies for the melting-pot. The weight of a full-sized ordinary plate in the rough is from six to seven hundredweight.

From fire to water. The plates are carried to the grinding-shed, and there imbedded in plaster on a double row of benches, large stone slabs, which extend from end to end along the floor. So singular is the appearance of the rapidly-moving machinery that an exclamation of surprise breaks from you on entering. The benches stand in pairs, each having a four-armed rubber for the grinding of the plates; and these rubbers are worked in pairs by a long shaft underneath the floor. An iron chain from the extremity of each arm reaches upwards to a centre of suspension at the ceiling, whereby the pressure is controlled; and to see some twenty or thirty quartettes of chains whirling round and round opposite each other, dancing as it were, the maddest reel you ever beheld, provokes a smile as well as an exclamation. The dance, however, is not a frolic, but real hard work, and with a plentiful supply of sand and water the rubbers, which are either of glass or iron, grind the plates smooth and level. In this process there is a positive waste of glass, probably an eighth of an inch on each side; but it cannot be helped, for the surfaces of the plate must be perfect. The time required is eight hours for each side; the plates are then smooth and level, but have the dimness

of ground glass. The sand, which must be well-washed before using, is a sharp red sand, dug a few miles from Birmingham, in the Black Country. The grinders at piece-work earn from twenty to thirty shillings a week.

Now for another remarkable change of scene, and the process of smoothing. We visit in succession two large light rooms, where none but women are employed, and their work is to rub one plate on another with finely powdered emery between until the surface becomes quite smooth. Standing one at each end of their table, pressing with their hands, aided in some cases by weights, they impart a slow sweeping somewhat circular movement, from side to side, and to-and-fro, to the plate; and if they continue this for five or six hours, they find the two surfaces as smooth as is possible by hand-labour. The labour looks simple enough, and yet men cannot accomplish it. There is some peculiarity in a woman's touch, or, as certain physiologists say, a something in the formation of her bust, essential to the result, which men do not possess. The larger the plates, the slower the movement; and when it happens that a patch is left where the surfaces have not come into contact they are smoothed with a hand-rubber, by a woman kneeling on the plate.

In all, eighty women are employed. Piece-work is acceptable to them as to the men, and they are always ready to avail themselves of overtime. Their earnings range from twenty to twenty-seven shillings a week. About one-half of the number are married, and some are wives of men employed on the premises; and place money in the savings-bank.

It is found, as a rule, that the best-looking women are the best workers, the cleanest in person, and most self-

respectful; and this is a quality considered in taking on new hands for the smoothing. Whether on this account, or the lightness and general cleanliness, these two workshops present a remarkably cheerful scene of industry. Ventilation is amply provided for, as experience has proved that a room occupied by women requires much more fresh air than a room occupied by men. Another characteristic discovered here is, that the hot and cold baths, always available on the premises, are much more resorted to by the men than by the women.

The smoothing takes away the dim surface, and makes the plates so bright that you would think them finished; but passing to the polishing-room, we shall see how a brighter state awaits them, and finally that of perfect brightness; and by means which give us another surprise. The plates are bedded as before in plaster on a thick table-top that travels with a slow movement now to the right, now to the left, while a wooden rubber lying flat on the glass, moves quickly to and fro in the opposite direction; hence no rub follows another immediately in the same place. The polishing material is known in the trade as rouge: peroxide of iron, produced by calcination of copperas. This, mixed with water, is plentifully sprinkled on the plates, indeed lavishly, for everything is red and sloppy withal—red machinery, red floor, red men, and red boys. From their appearance you might fancy that the urchins did nothing but sprinkle one another: you may well feel somewhat surprised on entrance. The boys get a shilling a day, and look quite as happy as those of cleaner avocations; the men earn from twenty-five to thirty shillings a week, and rejoice as do the others in piece-work. The polishing takes eight or

twelve hours, according to the quality of the glass; and in this way the plates acquire that exquisite smoothness and lustre which render them so ornamental as well as useful. Then, carried to the warehouse, they are cut to any required size on a baize-covered table; and are packed for transport, a dozen or more lying solidly one on the other, with nothing but a slip of thinnest paper between; for plates of glass, it is found, travel most safely when least padded. I saw slabs an inch thick cut with a diamond, and divided with an edge as clean and smooth as in common window-panes. These slabs are used for floors, where light is required in a gloomy or underground apartment; and many a clerk and warehouseman who had for years been condemned to the glare of gas, is now refreshed by imperfect daylight passing through the floor above his head.

Among the appliances of the works we saw tons of emery, in the form of heavy masses of metallic rock: the crushing-mill, with a ponderous pair of stones which reduce it to powder: the kiln, wherein large lumps of Derbyshire spar are converted into plaster by roasting; and the preparation of the rouge, all of which, carried on within the works, tend in no unimportant degree to excellence of production. There is besides a machine shop, for the construction and repair of machinery; for acres of mechanisms driven by three powerful steam-engines need repairing as constantly as a ship, or to borrow the sailors' simile—a lady's watch. And last, to get rid of the refuse costs thirty pounds a month.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Great Table-land—Surprising Mineral Wealth and Population—A Walk through the Black Country—Vegetation under Difficulties—Oldbury—Plenty of Chimneys—A Phosphorus Factory—Two Hundred Public-houses—Plenty to Eat and Plenty to Wear—Naish and Esfosterinist—Hooped Houses—Rowley Regis—Nailers—Women's Work—Poor Pay—Reason for not Marrying—The First Foley—Lye Waste—The Clent Hills—Shenstone's Leasowes—Hales Owen—The Drift—The Devil's Spadeful—Crispin and Old Harry—Dudley Castle—Netherton—Blackness and Greenness—The Wren's Nest—Earthquakes—The Castle Court—Eyesores—Volunteers—Woods, Rocks, Chasms, and Tunnels—The Wonderful Caverns—The Market-place—Facilities for Drunkenness—The Doctor—Herbal Pills—An Oration.

MANY a walk have Temperans and I taken through the Black Country, acquainting ourselves with its aspect, its amazing resources of mineral wealth and mechanical power, its tremendous industry, and laborious population. In the thirteen miles between Birmingham and Wolverhampton, or the six miles from Walsall to Dudley, there are few leading features that we have not observed during our perambulations.

That "meane hill" up which Leland rode into Birmingham, forms the southern extremity of the great table-land of central England, which may be described as an undulating plain, bordered in places by hills, all under a thousand feet in height. The little Rea, mentioned in a foregoing chapter, rises in the range that stretches from Clent to the Lickey, and from the same

elevation springs the Stour, which flows into the Severn, and so to the Atlantic on the west. This table-land comprises surprising interstratifications of clay, coal, shale, limestone, sandstone and ironstone, and is especially rich in coal, one of the beds being thirty feet in thickness. A line drawn on the map from Rugeley to Wolverhampton, thence to Stourbridge and the Lickey, thence through Birmingham, and on by Walsall back to Rugeley, would show the extent of the South Staffordshire coalfield. We have already seen something of the general aspect of the region; it is traversed by three principal lines of railway, by roads, canals, and tramways almost innumerable, and has a very numerous population. There are places within it containing thousands of inhabitants which are scarcely ever heard of, out of the district. Who ever hears of Great-Bridge, or Can-Lane, or Deepfields, or Toll-End, or Hill-Top, or Gospel-Oak, or Catchem's-Corner? And few besides students of the Registrar-General's census returns associate a population of 50,000 with Wolverhampton, 23,000 with Bilston, 36,000 with West Bromwich, 37,000 with Dudley, to say nothing of the swarms in other places, making a great total of 350,000. Not without reason did the Black Country figure in the extended franchise schedule of Mr. Disraeli's reform-bill.

We now start for another walk, journeying the first few miles by railway. The Stour Valley line accompanies for some distance the broad canal—one of Telford's latest works, which runs the whole length of the Black Country without a lock, contrasting with the crookedness of Brindley's canal adjoining. Soon we are speeding past Soho, and great heaps of coal, coke, and clinkers, great refuse-heaps that look like waste

mortar; past large patches of wild camomile, and here and there potato-patches, and little venturesome gardens that tempt Nature under very discouraging circumstances. The temptation is not in vain; for flowers and vegetables do grow, and station walls look gay with nasturtiums. We alight at Oldbury, in Worcestershire, a place of smother amid smother, and on leaving the station, can count seventy-nine furnace and factory chimneys without turning round, all of which pour forth their cloudy contributions, varied by the blue and yellow smoke of copper-works, while noises resound afar. Among the chimneys rise those of a phosphorus factory, where, with some risk, and in a fierce temperature, phosphorus is extracted from bones, in such quantities that England, which used to import, now exports the article, sending many tons to Vienna, and receiving it back on the ends of matches by hundreds of millions every week. One pound of phosphorus, worth about two-and-ninepence, suffices to charge a million of matches.

While we walk through the shabby-looking town, Temperans tells me, that, not till recently, when a public-meeting was held to start a savings-bank, could working-men find a single place in Oldbury to help them to save money, although there were two hundred public-houses to entice them to spend it. He had to follow a speaker at the meeting who held up riches and greatness as the objects most worthy of pursuit; and taking a truer view, impressed the crowd of hard-handed listeners with his conviction that goodness would prove to be a more satisfactory prize than either.

Here, as elsewhere, are signs of plenty to eat; piles of wheaten bread, such as German artisans never see, unless a Serene Highness invites them to breakfast;

and the stores of drapery are suggestive of plenty to wear. A man shows us the "gainest way" to our destination, and corrects himself with "you'll do 't more gain;" and reminds us of the dialect of Mercia. "Hur's naish enough for a leddy," said a miner, speaking of his wife one day to Temperans, meaning that she was very finical: and another described his wife as the "esfosterinist woman as ever was." What did he mean? Presently we come to deep clay-diggings, and more patches of wild camomile and clover, and docks and coltsfoot, and here and there dead trees, and such ragged perishing hedgerows as are pitiable to look on with the thought that they once looked beautiful and smelt sweetly with the bloom of may. Then appears an ironstone pit, and tramways, and not far off, a characteristic sign, the *Whimsey Inn*. Then we see—a frequent sight in the Black Country—houses hooped with iron, to keep them from tumbling to pieces. The ground is so widely undermined, that sinkings continually occur, to the detriment of all that stands on the surface, and you can hardly see a perpendicular chimney or house; and in some instances the distortion is so great that fall seems imminent.

Gradually we come to flourishing hedgerows, and wheat-fields, and the lower slope of the Rowley Hills, a range nine hundred feet in height, whence the view over the region of darkness is singularly striking in contrast with sunshine and verdure. From the visible portion of the landscape we can easily infer the beauty that must have pervaded the whole country before it was subjugated by havoc and smoke, when every slope had its wood, every hollow its rill, bordered by pleasant pastures; when Dud Dudley was making experiments, and proving that iron could be smelted with coal, with

manifest economy to woods and forests. He would not recognise the landscape now; but the hills rise above it, and refresh the eye with pleasant scenes, interspersed with quarries, from which is dug the blue basalt, the Rowley Rag of builders. The higher we go the more rural is the way, till we come to the village of Rowley Regis, whose church is as conspicuous from miles around as that of Harrow, and here the click-click, and thump-thump of hammers in nearly every house, make us aware of having arrived among the nail-makers. The whole village resounds with the strokes, and each cottage has its little forge occupying the place of the wash-house. We look into one after another and see none but women at work, three or four together, assisted in some instances by a boy or girl. The fire is in common; and one after another giving a pull at the bellows, each woman heats the ends of two slender iron rods, withdraws the first, and by a few hammer-strokes fashions and cuts off the nail, thrusts the end into the fire, and takes out the second rod, and gets a nail from that in the same way. So the work goes merrily on; the rods growing shorter, and the heap of nails larger. "It ain't work as pays for men," answers one of the women in reply to my inquiry," "and 't ain't much better than clemmin' for women." To make a pound of 'fine clout' requires three hours, for which the pay is threepence-halfpenny: so it is hard work to earn a shilling a-day. The woman being a comely body, I ask her why she had not married, to which she replies "I hanna seen my mate yet; and 'tis better to do 'ithout than have a bad un."

In another cottage two women are busy over 'countersunk tips,' for which the pay is two shillings

a pound; but the nails are small, and the heads must all be cone-shaped, hence, "'tis good work to make half-a-pound a-day." One of the two lamented that the days were past when she could begin on Tuesday and earn thirteen shillings a-week. Poor woman! she had to come to the anvil the day after her baby was born, because her husband had long been out of work. She sits down to comfort herself with a pipe of tobacco while we talk, and says: "We be poor foak here, and mun dew what we can."

The founder of the Foley family was a nail-maker of this neighbourhood. He went to Sweden twice with his fiddle, where he cunningly made himself acquainted with processes of the manufacture then unknown in England, and thereby on his return achieved fortune. Now women make nails for a penny an hour, and are conquered by machines, which pour out a stream of nails in tons upon tons every week.

We continue our walk, and presently get a view into a broad smoky valley, and see the populous district of Lye Waste, which a few years ago was a part of heathendom, with a population brutally vicious and ignorant; but is now by means of schools and itinerant preachers, showing signs of morality and civilisation. Beyond, rising boldly against the sky, appear the Clent Hills, a range which compensates Birmingham and the Black Country for part of their gloom, by broad slopes and breezy summits, by pleasant hollows, and a picturesque defile, with the village of Clent at one extremity, and St. Kenelm's chapel, the burial-place of the boy-prince, whose murder was made known by a miracle at Rome, at the other. We have happy recollections of our walks thither, taking Shenstone's Leasowes, and Hales Owen on the way, or Hagley Park, where Lord

Lyttelton entertained Thomson, and the poet wrote a portion of his *Seasons*. Clee and other hills of the west are in sight from the summit, and thence you can look into the broad vale which, as geologists tell us, was once an estuary of the sea, and a channel for a great torrent, traces of which remain in scattered granite boulders. In our walk beyond the hills, we saw one of these boulders by the road-side, a mass of rock drifted far from its native bed in Scotland. We then crossed the country to Kidderminster, a town of uncultivated carpet-weavers, who stone their representatives: sadly degenerated since the days when Baxter preached in the handsome old church, and there was, as he tells us, "no disorder to be seen in the streets on the Lord's Days, but you might hear an hundred families singing psalms and repeating sermons as you passed through the streets." Beyond that we came to Bewdley, and rambled about its pleasant neighbourhood, looking down on the Severn from Blackstone Rock, and a high hill-terrace, and sauntered in the spacious amphitheatre, the Giant's Grave, and scrambled about the Devil's Spade-full. The latter is an isolated mound of red-sandstone, concerning which the legend runs that the Evil One being wroth against Bewdley because of the extraordinary godliness of the inhabitants, set out one day, with a little hill on his spade to dam up the river and drown the town. He met a shoemaker carrying a bag on his shoulder, and beginning to feel weary, he inquired the distance to Bewdley. Crispin, emptying his bag of old shoes on the road, replied, "I have worn them all out a-coming from there." "Have you?" rejoins the other, "then I shan't carry this any farther," and he threw down his load and vanished, and the Spade-full remains to this day.

But leaving reminiscences: we continue our walk by a hilly road, admiring here and there the sylvan and classic names given to dismal residences, and the cheerful imagination of a proprietor, whose *Old Vauxhall Tea and Pleasure Garden* is flanked by rubbish-heaps and clouded by smoke. Yet it may be that some find pleasure there. Then the finely-wooded hill of Dudley appears, and we mount to the castle, and to the top of the keep, and there refresh our impression of the prospect. A strange prospect it is! Smoke prevails, rolling and drifting, blackest over the clusters of furnaces, which make their rushing flames visible even in daylight. Only on the west and south-west is there clearness, and even there the smoky dominion is spreading. There lies Netherton, a place of heavy work, where anchors are forged and chain-cables made, where by means of a fan, a powerful blast is distributed in pipes to all the forges of the largest premises, whereby the smiths have only to open a valve whenever their fire needs blowing. Wolverhampton is visible to the north-east, and thereabouts the smoke is densest. It is a pleasure to seek out the green spots, and verify our conclusion as to the former pretty aspect of the country. The castle stands proudly on the extremity of a limestone range, which stretches towards the north-east. Wren's Nest, the companion hill, exhibits combinations of wood and rock, of mining gear, and smoking kilns, and phenomena which may be compared with earthquakes. Years of burrowing, piercing of shafts, driving of galleries, and digging out of its heart, have left it so weak and hollow that every rain and frost is followed by landslips, sinking of the surface, and yawning of crevices, which if romantic in effect, are also alarming.

Many a time have we rambled thither and brought away slabs of fossils, and each time noticed striking changes: once we found the road cut in two by a huge chasm; on another occasion the slope over which we had scrambled, had become a deep gulf, rough with rocky lumps, that slid away under the foot; or perhaps a cottage had sunk up to its eaves, conferring on the inmates an undesirable snugness. It is a hill that well repays a visit, for it shows many picturesque effects, contrasts wheat-fields with glowing lime-kilns, commands interesting views, and the rock swarms with fossils, so that you may go away richly laden with *leptaena*, *spirifer*, *terebratula*, *bellerophon*, *orthoceras*, and *trilobites* by thousands. The stone being hard and susceptible of polish is used for chimney-pieces, which present to the eye the forms of creatures that lived in the fore-world at a time when the coal of the fire by which you sit, musing, perhaps, on Nature's archaeology, was in course of formation.

Then our eye, returning from its excursion, views the castle-hill, the gray wall, and broken masses of masonry, that environ the spacious court, heightened in effect by the leafy woods that crowd closely around. Here, as at other strongholds, history lurks and lingers, occupying the mind, while you read somewhat of her progress in the architecture wherein remain traces of varying peculiarities from the reign of Stephen down to Elizabeth. Now, the grassy inclosure is frequented by nursery-maids and groups of happy children, and all who will may enter and enjoy a pleasant stroll—if they can, with two of those stupid Russian guns standing in the midst as an eye-sore; and at times the Volunteers come together and practise the evolutions by which we hope to defend our homes in time of

need. In these days when disobedience is the prevalent motive from prentice-boys up to bank-managers, it is something to rejoice over that a hundred thousand men agree to obey, to appreciate cleanliness and punctuality, and submit to the discipline involved in the precepts—you shall do this—you shall not do that. What does England not owe to the skill of her bowmen of the olden time; and why should not the riflemen of Victoria's reign be famous as the archers who split a willow-wand at two hundred yards? We shall be none the worse for the skill; its acquisition adds a new element to our out-door exercises which will constitute a cheery counterfoil to the dismalness of modern cricket, and our neighbours will perhaps come to understand that we don't want to molest, and don't mean to be molested. We have a goodly heritage. Let us keep it: aye! for ever.

The walks about the hill, now rising now falling, overhung by trees, and diverging into bosky hollows are very pleasant. In some places the path skirts the edge of a precipitous slope formed as at the Wren's Nest, by abrupt sinking. Imagine a number of inverted bowls resting one on the other, and you will have an idea, in little, of the formation of these hills on the great scale by thick curving layers of limestone piled in a solid mass. Each layer taken by itself forms a huge arch, springing from great depths, and rising to a considerable height. Some of the layers are of much better quality than others, and these have been dug out, leaving an alternate series of cavities; besides which a canal traverses the hill far down in the darkness, and galleries run at different levels, and with all this hollowness beneath, the upper stratum is always ready to answer the demands of gravity however sudden.

Hence fearful gaps and caverns, and threatening chinks —which supply excitement to a stroll by the occasion they offer for a scramble, and a peep into the subterranean world. One tremendous gap has been converted into a canal-basin, and you can descend to the brink by a steep path, and look up at the cliffs, which rise high aloft, overhung by foliage, or watch the boats as heavily laden with stone or coal they emerge from the darkness of the tunnels on one side, and float onwards into the darkness on the other. Another gap, is now so thickly overgrown by bushes, through which here and there, peers up a gray mass of rock, so prettily bordered by hanging woods, that while gazing along it towards the keep that rears its crest above the dense foliage at the farther extremity, you will be alike charmed and surprised by so picturesque a scene.

Temperans has a right good friend at Dudley, who diversified his favours in my behalf by arranging for a visit to the caverns, as one of the principal excavations is called. A bye-path, descending steeply through the wood, brought us to the mouth, in a deep hollow: the gate was unlocked, the torches were lighted, and we went down to the edge of a now disused canal, and walked slowly onwards for perhaps half a mile. Strange gleams shone on the calm water; scarcely visible above our heads, hung the sombre rock, and shut us in on each side. We were in a long rough-hewn tunnel, walking between the water on one side, and a range of huge rugged pillars on the other, which support the roof, and abut upon a gallery running at a higher level in the rear. Pillar after pillar comes in sight as we advance, and it is easy to imagine each recess a vast gloomy cavern, for the torchlight fails to illuminate their inner limit. After a while all the torches but

one were put out, and that one was concealed in a corner, and we stood still in the darkness. Suddenly a pale light flickered, vast shadowy forms appeared, the pale light strengthened, and presently it was as if the moon were shining into the drear and darksome vault. The effect was magical: the light streamed on the water, the pillars came out in their rugged strength fainter and fainter in the distance, the pale rays slanting from between, and shining into the before undiscoverable cavities. But while we wondered and spoke our admiration, the light flickered, died away, and once more we were in deep darkness. The torch was shown ahead leading the return; we followed; then it was hidden as a second flicker began to appear, which grew into a crimson blaze, and produced new effects for admiration. One of the men in attendance, had mounted into the gallery, and there concealing himself behind the huge pillars, lit his coloured fires one after another. The next was a green light, and so the illumination went on with repetition of the same colours till we could contrast it with the dim daylight that penetrated farthest from the entrance. Then a red fire was lit upon a distant ledge level with the water, and the rich radiance shone along the liquid surface, and it became a sheet of ruby, and the grim roof touched on all its rough ribs and bosses by the vivid crimson, was reflected therein, and for a minute we beheld a spectacle that realised our dreams of caves where elfins haunt.

To think of the wondrous vault after this as a lecture-hall operates as a sedative. However, during the meeting of the British Association at Birmingham, a troop of geologists came hither, and while they stood grouped in the gloom beneath the ponderous limestone,

Sir Roderick Murchison discoursed to them of the geology of these remarkable hills.

A few years ago, the Tivy tunnel, which pierces the range to the north of the Wren's Nest, was opened for a canal. It is lighted with gas, and having a good towing-path, is easily accessible for observation of the strata and fossils.

In a subsequent walk we came to Dudley, on a market-day, and while pressing our way through the crowded market-place, had a good opportunity to note something of 'the people' and their ways. The rough element prevailed,—miners, smiths, labourers, pushing heartily here and there, accompanied by wives and children, and throngs of women whose husbands had not yet left their work, some eagerly buying, some moving away with heavily-laden baskets. How well they seem to understand that plenty to eat is essential to hard work. The men for their part superadd plenty to drink, and find many a one ready to encourage the notion. In the street by which we entered the town, we counted twelve public-houses, *Jolly Colliers* and *Miners' Inns* within a few yards, and the facilities for getting drunk in the market-place are in proportion to the demand. These matchless handicraftsmen, and indomitable labourers, demonstrate how near akin they are, after all, to fools; and with the example before their eyes of some of their kind who own the cottages in which they live, and have a growing deposit in the savings bank.

Walking one market-day down the main street of Walsall, I thought that a description of the scene would scarcely be recognised as English, so strange and foreign was the appearance of the stalls. The

display of wooden-ware, of crockery, of tubs and pans, and household utensils of many kinds, was so novel to me, though familiar enough to Black Country folk, that I walked three or four times up and down the steep incline to look at the articles, and inquire their uses. But strangest of all was the sight of perhaps a dozen stalls scattered among the others, exhibiting an array of glass jars and bottles, some filled with bright yellow liquid, some with various kinds of worms, some with a green substance looking like a preparation of cabbage leaves, some with bullets. By each stood a glib-tongued orator, vociferating the virtues of his vegetable medicines, extolling the efficacy of his pills, (which I had taken for bullets), and pointing to the ghastly exhibition of worms as the consequence of neglect of his warnings and recommendations. These orators are the doctors of the neighbourhood, consulted by miners, labourers, and artisans. I saw one poor woman asking advice for her infant in arms, and watched the result. The doctor prescribed pills, and put three of the bullets in a box, with instructions to administer half a one at intervals dissolved in sugared water.

With less of the foreign aspect, Dudley market-place exhibits a similar scene; the wooden-ware and queer crockery, and numerous stalls of 'sweet stuff' and 'drops,' of which a hundredweight will be sold in the course of a few hours. And the doctors find it worth while to appear, and make proclamation of their skill, and show their remedies. One, who had bottled up a worm nearly as long as a boa-constrictor, harangued the multitude with an assumption of scientific knowledge enough to put the whole College of Physicians to shame; "I am no M.D.," he cried, "and I'm not

ashamed to own it. I'm something better, for I can cure them as want to be cured, without charging a guinea for it. For five-and-twenty years have I stood in Dudley-market, curing no end o' people, and shan't fret if they don't put up a statue to my memory when I'm dead. Where's any o' your regular M.D.'s as can say the same? If there's any of ye have got anything the matter, you've only got to try my herbal pills, grown from the homogeneous mass of the earth, and you'll find 'em expel, eradicate, and destroy, all the sluggish phlegm and slime which undermine and injure the principles of health. My herbal pills will set ye straight and sound; if you haven't tried 'em, just look at those anatomical specimens of worms, look at those jars of coloured liquors, showing the state of your juices all true to morbid nature, and you'll see the corrupt and dangerous state of your insides."

CHAPTER XXV.

From Green to Black—Walk to Tipton—The Miner's Cottage—Amiable Landlord—What it is to be Poor—Don't Dare to Speak—Unfair Play—Butty and Doggy—"That's where 'tis"—Religious Beer-sellers—"What's to come o' we?"—Tommy-shops—Systematic Swindling—Obeying the Act and Cheating the Workman—The Miners' Catechism—Greedy Masters—Beneficent Masters—Bloomfield Iron-Works—How Cast-iron is converted into Wrought—A Thousand Hands—The Puddling-furnace—Red-hot Sponge—The Hammers—Ponderous Slabs—Rolling Boiler Plate—Perilous Employment—A Remarkable Parish—Fugitive Canal—Sunken Houses—"Anyhow."

A WALK of about two miles brought us from the green hill-slopes to black Tipton, reversing the order of the morning, which was from worse to better. Nothing is spared when mines are in question: pleasant little crofts, and ancient gardens, groves and plantations, must all be sacrificed when coal, iron, and limestone lie underneath. We saw here and there the beginnings of havoc, and very pitiable was the sight of walls and fences half thrown down, of hedge-rows uprooted and fallen trees, and soft green meadow furrowed by wheel-ruts. Ugly little cottages, tenanted by laborious miners, may be more pleasing to the eye of the political economist as indications of national wealth, but they disappoint the lover of the picturesque, notwithstanding that many a scattered potato-plot is suggestive of thrift and a growing population.

We were near Tip'm, as the natives call it, when a furious thunder-storm compelled us to run for shelter. "Come in, and welcome," said a woman to whom we apologised for unceremonious entrance at the open door. There she sat on a sultry afternoon by the high-heaped fire which never fails in a miner's cottage, summer or winter. Two men lay snoozing on the brick floor; by the window sat the daughter-in-law with her child, so the room, perhaps ten feet square, was as 'nice and close' as a miner could wish. Ugly cracks in the walls, a sunken sill, and leaning doorway betoken the treacherous ground beneath, and to our remark thereon the woman replies. "It's bin so this twenty 'ear. The landlord won't do nothin'; he says it ain't no use till it's done a-sinkin', and that'll be nivver."

"Tell him that a landlord is bound to keep his houses in tenantable repair, and that you won't pay any more rent till he does repair yours."

She laughed grimly and answered, "You dunno what 'tis to be poor, and live under them as ain't got no feelin's, on'y for money. Ye've got to put up wi' a deal as isn't right, and say nought about it. There's the water comes through the roof like spouts every time it rains."

Hereupon the daughter-in-law looked up to the much-stained ceiling; then hastened up-stairs to put tubs and pans under the 'spouts.' The two slumberers, aroused probably by the sound of voices, rose and rubbed their eyes, and one said, corroborating, "That's jest it: poor foak munna open their mouth in this country."

"Why?"

"Why?" he rejoined, also laughing grimly; "'cause

there's them as makes money by keepin' of 'em down. And if a butty hears of a poor feller speakin' his mind, there ain't no more work for he."

In Staffordshire the man who directs the work of the mine, is called the butty; he employs a subordinate whose title is doggy. The feeling that prevails between them and the miners is far from affectionate.

"Can't you go to another mine?" I asked; "and get under a butty who loves fair-play?"

This time the two burst into a loud grim laugh: "A butty loike fair-play! Ha! ha! ha!" the joke was too good. "Ye wunna find one in this country. Bless ye! the butties all hangs together; an' if one ha' got anythin' agin a man he tells t'others, an' there ain't no work for a poor feller in all the country. Some says, why don't ye emigrate? But how'm we to emigrate wi' our wages? Besides, we don't want to emigrate."

Having sympathising listeners, the man warmed with his subject, and his tone betrayed the earnestness of his emotion.

"Then what I have heard is perhaps true," I replied; "that the butty is hired to swear at the doggy, and the doggy to swear at the men?"

"Haw! haw! that's about it."

"But if thou dost thy work, why need thou care for the butty?" asks Temperans.

The miner thought for a moment, and seemed as if straining to move a heavy lump of coal, then said, "That's where 'tis. Ye see ivvery butty keeps a public-house, and we must go there o' Saturdays to be paid, and there he keeps us waitin'; and some gets tired o'waitin, an' begins to drink, an' mebbie they drinks three or four shillin' afore we gets our money. Then

sixpence is stopped from ivvery man all round ivvery week, 'cause, ye see, ivvery man is expected to drink a quart at pay-time whether he wants to or no. Then if a new man have bin took on at the pit, a shillin' is stopped from he for fut-ale (paying the footing), an' sixpence a-piece is stopped from all the rest on us for that. And so, ye see, wi' them sixpences, and what we drinks while we be kept waitin', there's some on us ain't got much to take out o' sixteen shillin' a week."

"But supposing a man's a teetotaller," says Temperans, "surely he has nothing to pay?"

"Haw! haw! they stops his sixpence a-week, and the fut-ale jest the same. What's the good of a butty keepin' a public-house, if he canna sell his beer?"

"But," pursues Temperans, "are not some of the butties religious men?"

"Haw! there's some of 'em as preaches; but that don't make no difference. They wants to sell their beer all the same."

One-sided though it be, the miner's statement embodies by far too much of truth, and reveals a systematic outrage of the principles of fair-play, which shocks and angers an unperverted mind, and makes it more and more abhor the debasing spirit that finds in money-profit a justification for wrong. No wonder that some wealthy men fear to enlarge the political privileges of the working-classes, when they have permitted such things to be on their estates—on the free soil of England. It is not to be denied that miners are drunken, ignorant, and brutal; but let them at least have fair-play. Of all the elements of civilisation, fair-play is the most powerful, and the most abounding in recompense. Fair-play:—not the feeble and capricious

good-nature that works so much mischief to the world, but the rightfullest sense of right.*

The rain having at length somewhat abated, we prepared to depart: Temperans for his farewell advised the two men to find half-a-dozen others like-minded with themselves, and then appear on a platform in Birmingham, and there tell the story of the foul-play. And I, while shaking hands, and saying good-bye, promised if they would give me the names of some of the wickedest butties, to show them up in very large print on the walls for miles around.

The notion of showing up a butty seemed a gleam of sunshine for them; but they answered as men who had made up their minds that no relief could come. "And what's to come o' we? Jest let the butty find out as we've bin a-talkin' about him; that's all. We couldn't stop no longer in this country."

This is one of the popular questions which you can hardly fail to hear of in the Black Country: another is—the Tommy-shops. Suppose, reader, that you are possessor of a mine or furnaces, and employer of a host of work-people, and that you establish a shop at which they can buy groceries and chandlery wares, and you will understand what is meant by a Tommy-shop. Taking advantage of the liberty of the subject to ascend to the gallows, or gravitate to perdition, the keepers of Tommy-shops used to compel their people to buy at the shops whether the wares were lower in quality and higher in price than elsewhere, or not;

* Since this was written I have read reports of a meeting held by Lord Ward and other proprietors, at which it was resolved that no butty or person employed about the mines or iron-works should have leave to keep a public-house. It was time. The danger now to be guarded against is that the butty will contrive that the wages shall still be paid at a public-house kept by some friend of his.

and so mercenary was the spirit in some quarters that customers were shamefully and systematically plundered. A wagoner was charged seventeen-and-sixpence for a five-shilling pair of breeches. Of course the people grew discontented and rebellious; but it was easy to dismiss murmurers and let them find work elsewhere if they could. At last the wrong became so flagrant that Parliament made it unlawful to pay wages in any other form than money. Let the people have their hard cash once a fortnight, and they will purchase wherever they please. The remedy seems effectual; but 'tis so easy to evade acts of parliament, as demonstrated by one firm which obeyed the law, and paid to every man the amount of his fortnight's wages, by a cheque on a bank at Birmingham. It takes two hours to walk to Birmingham, and travelling thither is troublesome, besides the cost; so the hands were not unwilling to listen to a suggestion that Mr. Tommy-shop would cash the cheques; and so he did, but only on condition that a handsome 'per-centage' should be laid out for groceries. The scheme answered its intended purpose for awhile; but public censure, even in the Black Country, proved too strong for it at last.

No wonder that a state of chronic ill-feeling prevails, or that in moments of intense exasperation retaliation should be attempted. A few years ago there was published *The Miners' Catechism*, which, in a parody of the Church Catechism and the Ten Commandments, set forth a highly-coloured and scurrilous statement of the people's opinion. For example:—"Rehearse the articles of your belief. I believe that my master, being set over me is at liberty, in his own opinion, to tyrannise over and cheat me by every means in his

power; that he employs his butty to help him in so doing, and he again the doggy to assist in abusing and swearing at me; and that for all purposes of bullying and over-reaching, these three are one." And again—"What is your duty to your master? My duty to my master is chiefly to slave for him and cringe to him from morning till night: to give up my life and strength in his service, and expect nothing but ill-usage in return."

There are masters who are about as fit to be masters as I am to be Pope, and among these some still take advantage of their men in the Tommy-shop. Some are continually incited thereto by the fact that the Tommy-shop is the most profitable part of their business. One of the pottery districts affords noteworthy cases in point.

On the other hand, there are masters who benefit their people by the Tommy-shop, who sell good articles at a fair profit, and make no attempt to infringe on the customer's right to purchase where he pleases. And there are men who prefer Tommying, as they call it, and say, "I'd rather be Tommyed than huckstered," having experienced the small knaveries of petty dealers; and to them an order on the shop for goods and money is the most acceptable form of payment. It sometimes happens that a man gets an order in advance and basely absconds to drink the proceeds. Then, if you question the wives, you will find the majority in favour of Tommying: where the husband is drunken it is their surety against starvation. Not unfrequently is the butty accosted by some poor woman, with—"Please give us a ticket on the Tommy to keep us from clemmin'." Even when the truck system flourished the men refused to join an *Anti-*

Truck Traders' Association that was projected for their benefit. Hence we may infer that honest Tommying is beneficial, and to wives and families a comfort.

We come to a canal-bridge which commands a view of the Bloomfield Iron Works. Ranges of buildings extend along the side of the canal, a branch canal runs up between them; a dozen or more of boats laden with coal, coke or iron, lie at the landing-places, and from different parts of the buildings rise thirty-three chimneys, tall and short, all smoking furiously, and the noise is in proportion to the smoke—overpowering. Ready assent was granted to the request for admittance contained in our friend's note, and under the guidance of a foreman competent to answer questions, we set off to see how cast-iron is converted into wrought-iron. The process is accomplished in a puddling-furnace, which may be described as a brick-furnace, somewhat oven-shaped, and so constructed that the rush of the flame falls upon the metal. There are fifty-six puddling-furnaces on the Works, each attended by a man and boy, who are changed every twelve hours, for the operations are continued all night as well as all day. The number of hands employed is about a thousand.

Four hundred-weight of pig-iron is placed in the furnace, the fierce flame urged by a blast plays thereon, and ere long the metal begins to boil, assuming the appearance of a large red-hot sponge. Then the man, thrusting in a long heavy rod, stirs the mass about continually, a laborious task under very hot circumstances, for he must face the fiery glare. Stir—stir—stir—and while he stirs the flame and the atmosphere act upon the iron and alter its quality, and the brittle becomes tenacious. Sometimes further change is produced by what the men call 'physicking,' that is,

throwing a given quantity of chemical substance into the furnace. Manganese, for example, produces a quality unusually hard, which is known to the trade as 'steel-iron.'

After from one-and-a-half to two hours the man, by dextrous movements of the rod, separates the red-hot sponge into five portions, hauls one forth, and runs away therewith, dragging it along one of the many stripes of smooth pavement which incline and converge towards the hammer. The lump is tossed on the block, down falls the ponderous mass of seven tons upon it, out gushes on each side a swift stream of sparks, the hammer-man moves the lump continually, presenting, now the edge, now the end, now the face, to the blow, until he has shaped it into a thick oblong slab. Then two boys drag away the slab on a wheeled truck to the weigher, who keeps account of "every man's make," as the foreman says. The hammer is not a steam-hammer, but is so balanced on a centre as to rise when the farther end is pressed by a 'cam,' that is a cog-shaped projection on a thick circular shaft. The shaft carries three cams, and as it rotates the hammer rises and falls with its whole weight, and a surprising effect. What a squash it produces at the first fall on the soft lump of iron, you might fancy that nothing but a film would be left; but the gushing sparks become fewer, and the redness fades, and there the solid slab remains of good wrought-iron.

A few yards distant stands an eight-ton hammer, used for the heaviest work, and by it stands a man to correspond, a Goliath, who wears iron boots that reach to his knees, as a protection from sparks. To him there is dragged a glowing red-hot lump of four

hundred-weight; squash! it is shortened by two-thirds and has thrown out sparks enough for an imperial fire-work night. Goliath drags it to and fro, bends his huge body and tosses it over and over, until it also is reduced to shape. The ground shakes for thirty yards around, and at every stroke we feel the vibration under our feet. And so it goes on night and day, and 'the make' is a thousand tons a week.

The want of repose seems dreadful: night and day the mighty engines drive the heavy machinery and massive rollers, that roll forth boiler-plate and sheet-iron, and hoops, and rods, and cable-bars, and T and angle-iron, and other kinds, by acres and miles. Of all these I wished to see the rolling of boiler-plate, and was gratified.

Near the hammers is a row of furnaces for heating the slabs. For the largest size of plate, four feet square, one of Goliath's four-hundredweight slabs is required. When sufficiently heated it is drawn on a truck to the rollers, a few yards distant; through it goes; the men on the other side raise and present it to the opening, and back it comes; and so it passes from side to side becoming thinner and broader at every roll. Each time one of the men turns the guage which lessens the space between the rollers, and so before the redness has disappeared, there is a broad smooth plate of less than an inch in thickness. It is then wheeled aside in readiness for the shears, by which the edges are trimmed and squared: and such shears! they gape widely enough and look strong enough to cut through the stem of a full-grown oak.

If perils do environ the man who meddles with cold iron; much more him who meddles with hot iron.

Our conductor had lost an eye by a blow from a flying fragment of red-hot metal; and some of the men show marks of injury. When we stood by the puddling-furnace he warned us to turn our faces aside as the first lump was drawn away, for the heavy rain had penetrated the roof and dropped in small pools on the pavement, and it not unfrequently happens that a red-hot lump flies to pieces with a loud report as it touches the water. That we might escape harm while under his charge, he had the succeeding lumps drawn past on an old shovel.

Notwithstanding the severe labour and profuse perspiration, the men look robust and contented. To supply the waste they drink large quantities of small-beer; and if any one desires a pint of ale he is permitted to go out, on condition of speedy return. We saw some who, after a spell at the hot heavy lifting by the rollers, came to their towels for a wipe, and then put on a clean dry shirt.

Besides its railways and tramways, Tipton parish has thirty miles of canal, whereby its surface is as much cut up as the underground. In places where three or four branches meet the complication of bridges, paths, roads, and junctions is curious and puzzling. That the water remains in the canals where all is hollow beneath, seems marvellous. "They 'm well puddled," said a man to whom I spoke on the possibility of failure; however not long afterwards, the bottom of a canal did fall through, and the water followed it. On every side you may see signs of sinking: the solid blue-brick bridges of the Great Western railway show fearful cracks; the other line shows the instability in a different way: there the bridges are of wood, and the sill that bears the timbers rests on the

ground, and the expedient is, as the ground sinks to place blocks and wedges under the sill.

Of all the instances of subsidence, we saw the most remarkable on our way to the railway-station: a whole row of cottages sunk four feet, still inhabited, and the road rising perpendicularly within a foot of their front, so that the doorway appeared no larger than the bedroom window. Seeing no stair or ladder for the descent, we were a little curious to know how the inhabitants made their way in or out, and I inquired of a little girl who was playing and singing in one of the sunken doorways, "How do you get down there?" and she looked up and answered, "Anyhow."

CHAPTER XXVI.

Duddeston—Aston Park—Darlaston—An Address—The Word in Season—Willenhall—Locks and Gridirons—Each to his Work—Food and Books—Tortured Landscape—Cottage Economy—The Tip—Blue Flats—Smoky Bilston—Wolverhampton—Battlefields and Factories—The Chemical Corner—A Trip to Wednesbury—Ethelfleda's Hill-top—Barr Beacon—Sutton Park and Chase—The Company's Territory—Three Thousand Workpeople—Active Operations—The Iron-Pit—Roasting-Heaps—Butty's Belief—The Furnaces—Artificial Volcanoes—The Fillers—Sixty Tons a Day—A Retrospect—An Old Lament—Simon Sturtevant and Dud Dudley—The Blast—How Long?—Sand-Beds——Bridges, Boilers, Turn-Tables—Railway Wheels—Ingenious Contrivances—Shrinking the Tires—Animated Industry—Tapping the Furnace—A Red-hot Stream—Sow and Pigs—Casting—Impressive Effects—About Recreations—The Underground Missionary.

THE trip to Oldbury took us along the south-western skirt of the Black Country; now we journey across its north-eastern skirt, catching sight of Duddeston, once the residence of Mrs. Schimmelpenninck; of Aston Park and its leafy avenue; of the Tame and patches of green meadow, and might fancy we were running away from the smoke, but for our rapid change of direction which brings us all too soon under the murky cloud. Then the gloom is that of a November fog in London, and trees and chimneys look spectral, and we might almost fancy that labour is indeed under a curse. Beyond Walsall it grows darker; a mile or two farther and we hear the noises of Darlaston, and see its dismal aspect, and Temperans tells me a story. He was once

invited to that ugly place to address a temperance-meeting, which, as it happened, was held in a little dirty chapel, most insalubriously over-crowded. The throng, however, listened with marked attention, no one more so than a big, burly miner in woollen smock, who stood on the topmost stair of the pulpit. He kept his eyes fixed on the speaker, and remained seemingly unmoved, until the generalities having been set forth, the practical division of the discourse was entered on, when he appeared flushed with sudden animation. "Ah!" said the speaker in his persuasive tones, "what power there is, my friends, in money, for good as well as for evil. Independence, with all its advantages may be had for the two shillings a day which many a man spends in drink, or even for one shilling a day. With that money any man, whether miner, puddler, or labourer, may have land of his own, and build a house on it if he likes; in fact, every quart of beer that he drinks would buy him a foot of land." No sooner was this spoken than the big, burly miner, breaking out in uncontrollable excitement, bestowed a tremendous thump on the pulpit, and cried, "Well, Oi nivver! hew'd a thowt it!" and shouting to the speaker, asked; "Is it true, Gaffer? is it? say it again, Gaffer! say it again. It's the best bit Oi ivver heerd on in my loif. Oi wunna be swallerin' land no longer, Oi'm blest if Oi dew."

Need I relate the rest? It was the word in season for the rough, heavy-fisted miner; and now he dwells in his own house on his own land.

The train stops again, and we alight at Willenhall, which employs itself chiefly in lock-making, but is not above manufacturing gridirons on profitable occasions. Different towns, different work. Walsall applies its

industry to buckles, bits, curbs, and stirrups; Darlaston delights in huge, lumbering castings; Wednesbury excels in the rolling gear of railways, and in turntables; Bilston smothers itself with the ceaseless smoke of furnaces; Wolverhampton revels in light steel toys, iron tobacco-boxes, candlesticks, and japanned wares of many kinds, as ready to sell to gold-diggers at Sacramento and Ballarat, to Kroomen and Ashantees, as to the dwellers in castles, or the wearers of crowns. And so all through the Black Country, each town finds work to do, and does it.

Neither in Willenhall, or in its suburb, called New Invention, must you look for loveliness; but of good bread and meat, rabbits and poultry, you will see abundance; shops of booksellers also, one stored with Wesleyan books and religious stories; the other with light reading—*The Willenhall News*—*The Gipsey Bride*—*The Bandit Chief*—and Christmas carols—

> "Call up the butler of this house
> Put on his golden ring,
> Let him bring up a glass of beer,
> And the better we shall sing."

You will look in vain for a house that entertains a butler, but if in quest of cheap locks, you can buy a dozen, each with key and catch complete, for eightpence-halfpenny. It will perhaps surprise you on peeping in at the long range of window in one of the many low workshops, to see that lock-making ranks among the dirtiest of trades.

We walk on farther beneath the smoke. What a tortured landscape! Half-finished mining-works are a grievous disfigurement; the ground is bestrewn with rubbish-heaps, old timbers, old pipes, heaps of bricks, of coal and ironstone in rubbishy confusion, above which

rise gaunt timbers, the cage, half full of cinders and ashes from its last fire, and the big trumpet-mouth of the ventilator, while a sod-roofed hovel does duty as office; haggard trees seem content that their last hour has come, half-starved poplars make ready to fall, and all around the hedges, fences and gates look utterly wretched. Such a scene is worse than abandonment, for when man departs, Nature steps in and masks the ugly heaps with coltsfoot, grasses, and flowering weeds.

On all sides the creaking noise of whimseys prevails. Never mind an ugly surface, while riches, stored beneath, may be had for the digging. We come to a lodge, and the pillared entrance to a lawn and shrubbery; but the rusty railing totters, the gate is broken, the lodge is deserted, and the deep ruts of heavily-laden carts traverse the shrubbery. Who wants a pleasure-ground that bars the way to mineral wealth?

We pass many little cottages of two rooms, and see a big chest-of-drawers standing opposite the door. Many of them are models of cleanliness; and women are scrubbing the brick floors with lavish use of water. Damp has no terrors for them. The door-step is sprinkled with powdered brick, the floors are red, and the walls blue, but 'spotty,' as artists say, having apparently been dabbed with the blue-bag. Here and there the windows are adorned with a dwarf-blind of perforated metal set in a bright brass bead: specimens of Wolverhampton art.

Everywhere the refuse heaps encroach on the surviving grass of once flourishing pastures, lengthening foot by foot as the 'skips' from the ironstone-pits rumble down with their loads. To facilitate the unloading, these trucks have no sides nor ends; the lumps of

stone are kept in place by three oblong square hoops, so that when the truck comes to the 'tip,' the hoops falling with the load make the clearance complete. Numerous small lumps of iron ore occur among the refuse, wliich are worth picking out, and women or girls stationed on the end of the heap, examine every load as it is 'tipped,' and throw the good lumps out for the furnace. These lumps are known locally as 'flats,' or 'blue flats,' a term which reminds us of the poor woman we fell in with on the way to Welshpool. A diligent picker may earn eighteenpence a day.

The iron-pits multiply as we approach Bilston (Bils'n), and the smoke swells, and thickens, and rolls in overwhelming clouds, dark and fearsome. Havoc has fixed his head-quarters here without a doubt. There are a few patches of what would be grass in happier circumstances and a scrap of a hedge, that seem left by way of reproach. Here and there children are playing round a muddy pool, as happy, apparently, as if they were familiar with green fields and sunshine. The cottages are in the most debased style of the Despondic, and look nothing the better for leaning this way, that way, every way, or for having taken the first plunge towards burial. Can they be worth the rods, bars, and plates of iron by which they are kept from tumbling into heaps of brick-bats?

The nearer the town the blacker is the scene; the smoke more diffused, for here the pale fumes rising from the large heaps of roasting-ore, fill all the space between the ground and the heavy clouds above; and we are amid noise and uproar, ponderous thumps, succeeded by a fierce rushing hiss, wherewith clang, clatter, and fizzing are strangely intermingled. Who would think that twenty-five thousand people could be

found to inhabit such a place! Yet hither they come and flourish, for more iron is raised from the Bilston field than in the whole of Sweden.

Taught by that terrible teacher—Cholera, the town has ever since had an active Board of Health, who do good work in the mitigation or removal of avoidable evils. As at Willenhall, there is no loveliness, though there are signs of wealth. The Methodist chapel appears to be the best building in the town.

Two miles farther and we come to Wolverhampton, a town which may be regarded as a smaller edition of Birmingham. An old rhymer describes it as:

> "A thriving town for arts Vulcanian famed
> And from its foundress good Wulfruna named."

Among the monuments in St. Peter's church is a statue of one of the captains whom Drake employed to good purpose against the Spaniard; the churchyard commands a prospect of a green country to the north-west; there lies Tettenhall, where Edward the Elder once put the Northumbrians to rout; and at Wednesfield, about the same distance to the north-east, he vanquished a Danish army: events that would not be worth mention were it not for the mighty changes that have since taken place. Now, if you look at Wolverhampton from a distance, you see a great extent of dusky roofs, of sluggish smoke, and tall chimneys, so numerous that to describe them as a forest is hardly a figure of speech. As if to reconcile the townsfolk to their fate by the sight of something yet more depressing, one of the stupid Russian guns has been mounted in the market-place.

Then taking a trip by rail to Dudley we see the chemical corner of the Black Country, as it may be

called, for it is so much overspread by chemical works that you look as vainly for beauty as at Bilston. As seen from the station, Deepfields appears to be afflicted by restless steams as well as smoke, besides sharing in disagreeable smells that float free as the wind. After all this, how refreshing to the eye are the slopes at the foot of the Wren's Nest!

Now for another trip: along the Great Western railway, which runs midway between the two that we have already travelled; Wednesbury, or Wedgebury, as the natives call it, being our halting-place. The town is built on a hill-side, surrounded by the inevitable features, and the church standing on the summit, is seen by its spire from miles around. There, in the olden time, stood one of Ethelfleda's castles. To one familiarised with smoke and blackness the churchyard is an agreeable resort, for it overlooks an undulating agricultural landscape. With this abrupt height the Black Country here terminates, and Vulcan leaves the fields to Ceres. We look across to Barr Beacon, one of the note-worthy hills of the neighbourhood, from the top of which you can survey the delightful sylvan region of Sutton park and Chase. Therein are large clear lakes, cascades, miles of wood, forest glades, stately trees, and tangled covert, bold wooded eminences, grassy levels and uplands, and great slopes roughened and beautified by fern and gorse. It charms the rambler by wildness, and the chance of losing his way in the thickets, and rewards the antiquary by sight of some furlongs of a Roman road—Icknield Street, along which he may pace undisturbed. An autumn day spent there in a ramble through the glades, now knee-deep in fern, now crossing sunny slopes, now pacing

the ancient highway, has left a very pleasant impression on my mind, and a wish for repetition. To the inhabitants of Birmingham and the Black Country, it is a resort that compensates them for gloomy skies and weariness of the workshop.

You have only to turn round to change the view from greenness to blackness, of hedgerows and trees for fitful flames, and chimneys short and tall, thick and thin, all as active as if smoking were the very merriest of pastime. A group of the most active, standing near three blazing furnaces, indicate the works of Lloyd, Forster, and Co., to which, having descended from Queen Ethelfleda's hill-top, we make our way. The magnitude of the operations there carried on, may be inferred from the fact, that a territory three miles in length and one-and-a-half in breadth, between Wednesbury and Darlaston, belongs to the company; that they employ nearly three thousand work-people, and pay five thousand pounds in wages every fortnight in hard cash.

The works here present us with a concentration of Black Country phenomena, and a striking instance of the convenient nearness of the underground deposits to one another; for while a coal-pit appears in full work on one side of the road, on the other are pits of ironstone and limestone, equally busy. We shall see by-and-by what astonishing results are produced therefrom. Great heaps encumber the ground, some glowing and smoking in the process of calcination; tramways run in all directions; laden trucks and skips are dragged heavily along by horses; the whimseys keep up an incessant creaking as the long ropes rise or fall in the deep shafts, accompanied all around by a discord of noises, thump and bang, rattle and roar, click and hiss,

and many of the minor sounds heard where labour plies his tools cheerfully upon hard metal.

Under excellent guidance we begin at the beginning, and see skip after skip hauled up from the ironstone pit laden with ore or refuse, the load kept in place by three hoops, as we saw at the heap near Bilston. The butty explains that the 'mine,' as he calls the metalliferous deposit, lies at a depth of three hundred feet, imbedded in the rock in heavy lumps or 'eggs' of different sizes and quality, described locally as 'new mine,' 'gubbins,' 'blue flats,' and 'black-jack,' the latter being the best. When brought to the surface it is carefully picked from the 'dirt' and refuse with which it is too plentifully mingled, and is piled in assorted heaps ready for the roasting. The limestone, which lies one hundred and fifty feet deeper, is raised at the rate of two hundred tons a day. Referring to the position of the rocks, the butty disputes the theories and conclusions of geologists. "They talk," he said, "about what happened at one time or another time; but my belief is that God created the coal and the ironstone, and the limestone and the fossils, and put them where they be at the very first. It don't stand to reason that He made one before the other, and then had to bring 'em together by an earthquake. And they say that coal grows, but I know places where the coal was dug out twenty year ago, and there they be, just as empty as ever. If coal grows, why ain't they filled up again by this time?"

We cross to the three tall blazing furnaces: in their rear boys are breaking up the limestone into small lumps, under a range of sheds, and men are filling enormous wheelbarrows with the roasted ore, with coal and coke, and the broken limestone. From the sheds

a broad incline extends to near the top of the furnaces, and up this the barrows are wheeled and placed one behind the other in a certain order, and the machinery being set to work, they are hauled up on one side of the slope, while a train of empty barrows descends on the other. We walk up and find ourselves on an iron platform, forty feet from the ground, and so near to the blazing crests of the three furnaces as to induce a moment's pause. The heat, however, is bearable, and we can walk round the craters, as they may be called, and look down upon the preparations in the foundry beneath, and listen to the roar with wonder. But the barrows are up; the 'filler' opens an iron door, wheels the foremost barrow across the platform, and shoots its load of half-a-ton into the furnace; then another, and another, till all are emptied, when they are sent down to be refilled, and more full ones are drawn up. The opening of the door makes us start back from the intolerable heat and glare, for there we look directly into the furnace, on a level with the summit of a huge mass of fire, forty feet in height. We can almost fancy it a volcano, so fierce is the heat, so angry the roar; and are impressed beyond previous conception by the tremendous forces required to make Nature surrender her mineral treasures. And this goes on night and day, Sundays excepted, without intermission, for four years at a stretch, till the hearth requires renewal, or circumstances necessitate a 'blow out.'

The ordinary charge is three barrows of coal, one of coke, two of ironstone, one of limestone, the latter being the flux, facilitating the separation of the iron, as borax is the flux of assayers. The proportions vary according to the quality of iron required, and to main-

tain any particular quality, the order in which the barrows are shot must be carefully maintained. Charge after charge is shot in all through the twenty-four hours. Once in the furnace, the fire soon lays hold of the crude mass, the fuel sinks and disappears, the iron yields to the intense heat and trickles down to the hearth, and accumulates there in readiness for the periodical discharge. Every twelve hours, at five in the morning, and at five in the evening, ten tons of iron are drawn off from each furnace. Sixty tons a day! week by week, month by month, year by year. Mr. Robert Hunt's tables, published by the School of Mines, may well show a prodigious return of iron for the Black Country. The quantity of iron ore raised in South Staffordshire in 1858, was 959,000 tons; in North Staffordshire, 699,947 tons: the total value being 575,628*l*. This ore when smelted yielded 733,117 tons of pig-iron. In the same year the South raised nearly 5,000,000 tons of coal; the North, 1,750,000 tons. The number of puddling-furnaces in South Staffordshire is 1945.

Let us pause here for a moment, and take a peep into the Past. About the time that the Spanish Armada was defeated, a great outcry and lamentation arose because of the waste and decay of woods and forests, and that having no timber wherewith to build ships the utter ruin of England must speedily ensue. Many a man grieved in his old age over the disappearance of woods where he had taken birds'-nests when a boy, and the proprietors of the salt-pans in Worcestershire, and iron-smelters everywhere, whose "voragious works" devoured enormous quantities of wood and charcoal, were often accused as enemies of their country. But the demand for fuel increased, and to avert the evil

consequences ingenious patriots made experiment after experiment to discover a way of smelting iron with pit-coal, or 'sea-coal' as it was then called, and what they proposed and purposed may be read in the archives of the Patent Office. Simon Sturtevant, writing his specification in 1612, renews the lamentation over the destruction of timber, by the four hundred furnaces, 'milnes,' then at work in Kent, Surrey, and Sussex, to say nothing of the number in other parts of the kingdom, and describes his method for using pit-coal and thereby saving the woods and 320,000*l.* a year. He failed; but other schemers were ready to take his place, and among those who followed we find Dud Dudley taking out a patent for the same object, and persevering in experiments. Speaking of himself, in his statement, he says, "having former knowledge and delight in Iron Works of my father's when I was but a youth, afterward, at twenty years old, was I fetched from Oxford, then of Bayliol Colledge, anno 1619, to look and manage 3 Iron Works of my father's." But wood and charcoal failing, he experimented with pit-coal, and reports thereof: "I found such success at first tryal as animated me, for at my tryal or blast, I made Iron to profit with pit-cole, and found *Facere est addere Inventioni.*"

He laments the waste of small coal which was then left in the mine as worthless, and computes the consequent loss of fuel fit for the furnace at five thousand tons a year within ten miles of Dudley Castle. "If all the coles and ironstone," he argues, "so abounding were made right use of, we need not want iron as we do; for very many measures of ironstone are placed together under the great ten yards thickness of cole, and upon another thickness of coal two yards thick, as

if God had decreed the time when and how these Smiths should be supplyed and this Island also with Iron."

After what we have seen, it is somewhat surprising to find this much-persecuted inventor declaring that to make one ton of iron in twenty-four hours would be sufficient: "we need not a greater quantity," he says. With that quantity there would be no lack of work for the smiths and nailers in the neighbourhood of Dudley, whose trade was "so bad that many of them were ready to starve or steal."

We descend from the hot platform and enter the house, where an engine of a hundred horse-power is driving in the blast. And a mighty blast it is that keeps up the intense heat and combustion of three such fires. The blowing cylinder, or bellows, is nine feet in diameter, and at every stroke of the piston the tremendous rush of air is accompanied by a hollow roar and a reverberation as if a giant's gong were sounding in a vast cavern, and under all, such a ceaseless painful moan, that you can hardly help imagining the blast-engine some fearful instrument of torture. Night and day it labours, taking in huge gulps of air, and sending a constant stream into the blazing fires with amazing velocity.

We walk round the base of the furnaces, and see how they are ribbed and hooped with iron to support the massive brick walls. A fierce glow shows under the vent; from time to time a molten stream 'white hot,' flows down the heap of ashes and clinkers, and solidifies in those strange-looking masses of slag which, seen at a distance, may be likened to Titanic oyster-shells. From time to time the chain is lowered, and the ponderous disks are hauled up an incline and

dragged away to widen the enormous refuse-heaps which encumber the ground.

How long is all this to go on? is a question that arises in a visitor's mind. So much has the Black Country been bored, honeycombed, and ransacked, that the day cannot be remote when the supplies will be exhausted. That "it won't be in our time" appears to be a sufficient answer to dwellers on the spot; or they smile and add, "there's Cannock to move to, after this." At any rate, the Works here look forward to long years of life and prosperity, for within the territory there are eight hundred acres as yet untouched.

On the low earthen floors in front of the furnaces men are busy laying down solid beds of sand, and forming therein a series of gutters, of which those running lengthwise are as broad and deep again as those crossing at right angles. These beds are prepared in readiness for the tapping, which will take place at the appointed hour; meanwhile we will look at the operations in other parts of the premises.

Twelve hundred of the Company's men are employed within these works; hence the scene is a busy one. Some are building bridges with iron plates and rivets; some ply their hammers upon long girders; some are fashioning roofs, some boilers; and some are at work upon the very largest of turn-tables. Nearly every shed has its steam-engine—there are forty in all on the estate—and whatever machinery can do towards the fitting and fabrication of railway appliances is here accomplished. Things of a few tons' weight are rotating slowly in the lathes, and the men in charge apply their tools and cut shavings from the stubborn surfaces as coolly as if they were turning pill-boxes. With the

spirit, though not the stature of giants, they do the work which you fancy only giants should attempt.

The wheels of railway carriages are manufactured here in surprising numbers by a series of interesting and ingenious operations. Flat wrought-iron bars are put into a machine, and at one pressure are bent into a triangular form, the two ends left a few inches apart, and the outer angle having a slight curve. Place a number of these side by side with ends all pointing inwards, and the rim and spokes of a wheel are produced; then by pouring molten iron into a properly-fitted mould, you cast the nave of such a diameter that it shall embrace within itself the ends of the triangles, and thus form a wheel in the rough. In another way the commencement is more like a preparation for a dwarf fence than for a wheel, for it is a long straight bar to which short upright posts are firmly welded at equal distances apart. Perhaps you will liken it to a big comb, with most of the teeth taken away; however, you will presently see it placed in a machine which bends the bar to a semicircle, and lo, with the bending the upright posts have become convergent, and now appear as the spokes of half a wheel, of which the bar is the rim. Weld two of these semicircles together, and you form another wheel in the rough.

By a patient course of chiseling and filing, the black rough thing becomes smooth and bright, and ready for the lathe, which shapes it to a true circle. Watch-makers can hardly take more pains in their workmanship than are taken in the manufacture of railway wheels; exact dimensions are prescribed, and every part of the work must fit its corresponding gauge, or the turner will certainly see it reappear before him. As railway wheels rotate with and not on the axle, you

see many a pair of wheels forming but one body with their axle moving round in the lathes, receiving the finishing touches, which result in perfect circularity.

Wheel-tires range in weight from three and a half to nine hundred weight, the heaviest being used for engine wheels. The best are made of the steel-iron which, as we already know, is converted in the puddling-furnace by a dose of 'physic.' As a rule, none but the trust-worthiest of wrought-iron is used in the manufacture of wheels; but the commonest truck-wheels are cast in moulds in the usual way. The fitting on of the tires is a nice part of the process, for the fit must be such as will hold during many a thousand miles of rapid travelling. To accomplish this, advantage is taken of the nature of the metal: the ponderous rings are heated in a furnace to a red-heat; are then taken out and placed in a shallow cistern or 'bath;' the wheel which hangs suspended from a crane is lowered down till it rests within the tire, the water hisses and bubbles around the tire, which shrinks in cooling, and at length holds the wheel in the very closest embrace. Then, for further security, small iron wedges, or 'clips,' which are to hold the tire in place should it ever loosen, are driven in around the rim. So much depends on the wheels, that no ingenuity has been spared in devising the best mode of construction. One of the recent improvements is a wheel in which the place of spokes is supplied by solid elm plank, so fashioned, that if even the tire should break it cannot fly off.

The wheel-shops appear to be the head-quarters of industry, so animated are the movements and operations there carried on, so incessant the noises that prevail. Now the tremendous thump of the steam-hammer makes the very ground tremble, now the long-

handled sledge-hammers rise and fall with clattering din, intermingled with the musical ring of the anvils, the dull crushing sound of smitten iron, the roar of bellows, and voices of men. How the men work! not with the take-it-easy manner that prevails in the dockyards where Government pays with the nation's money; but every man lifting and striking, welding and forging as if independence were to be achieved by the end of the week. What a contrast! If Lord Clarence Paget would but make a tour of the Black Country, and see how men can work, he would then know how men ought to work, and pay the dockyards accordingly. If we are to hand over more than a million a month for our navy, let us at least have money's worth for our money, whether in labour or ships.

And all the time, as furnace doors are opened, forth stream the bright scorching rays, and the iron, heated to whiteness, and seeming to quiver, is hauled out and quickly shaped amid showers of sparks. Every blow tells, for rapidity is essential; and before you are aware the operation is complete, and your eyes are dazzled by the reopening of the furnace door for the lifting of another quivering bar to the anvil. Truly the work goes on in earnest.

But, it is five o'clock, we must return to the blast-furnaces. The furrowed sand-beds are all ready; the foundry-men wait expectant, having prepared all their moulds, the huge 'ladle' is lowered into its pit, and the 'keepers' are listening for the signal-word. It is spoken. The one nearest the furnace makes a few heavy lunges with a long bar at the clay which stops the tapping-hole, lump after lump falls away, a sudden twinkle appears, and out rushes the molten iron, and flows rapidly down the sloping channel to the pit, where

it shoots, a cascade of fire, into the huge pot. Turn aside, or shut your eyes, and you may fancy that cream is pouring out, so liquid is the sound of the glowing metal. The stream ripples as it flows, and throws up brilliant coruscations at the plunge. Presently a shout announces that the pot is full; at once the stream is diverted into a side channel; on it flows, glowing and quivering, and forthwith all the cross gutters are filled, and from the appearance you might fancy the large sand-bed covered by a red-hot gridiron. There lies another sand-bed beyond, and still the stream flows wherever the communications are opened, and the coruscations multiply, and another gridiron appears, large enough for the broiling of a score of oxen. Still the stream flows, and is led to a third sand-bed, quivering, glowing, and coruscating still; and so on till the utmost corner has received its fiery draught. And the while we see a sight that makes us think of walking on red-hot ploughshares with diminished admiration, for the men, indifferent alike, as it seems, to sulphurous fumes and red-hot iron, walk up and down the ranges of bars, spade in hand, and cover them broadcast with sand, exclusion of air being desirable during the cooling.

In the gridirons, as we have called them, the principal channel is termed the 'sow;' the minor lateral channels are the 'pigs.' Hence the term 'pig-iron.' When cold it breaks easily by a blow, and shows a crystalline structure. We have already seen the process by which it is converted into wrought-iron, changing its substance from crystalline to fibrous, and from brittle to tough.

Ere long the sow and her progeny will be lifted and drawn away to the puddling-furnaces in another part of

the territory, and the sand-beds will be prepared anew, and ready for the tapping of another furnace at five to-morrow morning.

Meanwhile the huge ladle has been lifted by the nearest of the cranes which stand in a double row along the foundry. It is suspended and fitted with tilting handles in the same way as the pot which we saw at the glass-works, and as the principal casting is near the centre of the shed, it is shifted from crane to crane, as from one giant arm to another, to the required spot. Then the men pour and pour until perhaps a ton of the fearful liquid has flowed into the mould; suddenly the jets overflow, indicating complete fulness, and without delay the ladle is passed on from mould to mould. To a stranger the operation appears dangerous: if that great caldron should happen to fall! then the sight of lurid flames bursting with a loud throb from the sand-heap in which the moulds are imbedded is startling; but the men take no heed thereof, and continue their work with composure, those who are working a rod up and down in the vents to facilitate escape of air from the solidifying mass inside, amusing themselves from time to time by a whirl of the rod, which throws off a train of brilliant sparks. We follow the big pot to the farthest mould, where it is canted that the foreman may look in. How his forehead shines and his eyes glisten as the hot glare meets them! "We must have a drop more," he says in a quiet tone, and two men fetch a ladle full from the furnace, which poured in with the other makes enough for the final casting. By this time the foundry is uncomfortably hot and smoky, and tastes of sulphur, and we step with a sensation of relief to the open air.

The dusk of an autumn evening is the most favour-

able time for a visit to the foundry. Then, as I have seen, the riotous flare of the furnaces sends streams of light across the floor, but all around prevails a gloom as of a vast darksome cavern, where here and there Vulcan has made ready his instruments of toil; and the hollow moan and fierce rush of the never-ceasing blast seem unearthly to the ear. Then, as the stream of fire leaps from the furnace, the dreadful glare falls on roof and pillar, touches crane after crane, fainter and fainter as it recedes in the gloom, and diffuses a halo round the dark figures of the men, as with the confidence born of use and practice they go through their sweltering task. And when at last the blast rushes through the slag-pit, driving forth a storm of red-hot clinkers, it seems as if the exciting scene were terminated by a burst from a volcano.

There is something about these grand mechanical operations which appeals strongly to one's imagination and sympathy. Man and Nature are here brought close together. The raw rugged material formed in the remoteness of the Past, ere yet Britain arose from the deeps, which has lain so long undisturbed, is now dragged forth, and wonderfully transformed by art and industry. Man ransacks the Past to enrich and utilize his Present, and within the space of four weeks hews the ore of the primeval ages from its deep, dark bed, and converts it into wheels for railway-trains. And look at the man—the worker: see how he labours, and overcomes. Is there not something more in all this than meets the eye? For my part, though I have on sundry occasions visited the great swarming works of this murky region, I become subject to the same emotion as at first: an emotion which I have not yet been able to shape into words.

Five thousand pounds every fortnight: one hundred and thirty thousand pounds a year paid in wages alone. With such resources at command, what might not the working-classes achieve if they would? But their case must be fairly considered. Violent labour will have violent excitement and passive recreations in spite of Mechanics' Institutes; and mind and heart are not to be touched and enlightened in the same brief time that ore is changeable into iron. Let schools and Institutes be encouraged nevertheless; but offer therewith passive as well as vigorous recreations, and enticements from the fascinations of drunkenness. Let us have rifle-shooting, and foot-ball, quoits, and cricket, and every suitable out-door game; and let advantage be taken of the drama for mental diversion. I should like to see an experiment tried in the Black Country, with a theatre in every populous neighbourhood, where short pieces—farce and comedy, should be represented, accompanied by good music. One condition of the experiment should be, closing of the performances at nine o'clock.

We have now followed the most useful of our metals from the pit's mouth to the furnace, and thence through some of its applications. We have watched the workmen, and knowing what are their wants and weaknesses can appreciate the advantages offered to them by schools for children and for adults connected with the Works here in question. The miners too are not uncared-for during the six working days; an 'underground missionary,' a Scotchman, is employed to visit them daily in the mines, and it is not an unusual sight to see him reading to perhaps sixty or seventy men and boys during their dinner hour. I hope some day to go down the mine and see the sight with my own eyes.

The result hitherto is satisfactory: the men take pleasure in listening to reading and exhortation, and show that they have profited by choosing a reader from among themselves at times when the missionary is occupied in other mines. Besides his underground work, the worthy Scotchman teaches the adult school in the evening hours.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Away to the Sunshine—Valley of Tame—Tamworth—Burton-upon-Trent—A Beery Town—Mountains of Barrels—Leviathan Breweries—Results of Bitter Ale—Draining the Wells—Nasty Practices—The Proud Teeler—Queer Dialect—A Mercian Carol—Bass and Co.'s Brewery—Brewing on the Great Scale—Beer, Malt, and Hops—A Wonderful Bridge—Scalpley Hill—Prospect—Vale of Trent—St. Modwen—Burton Abbey—A Fieldpath Walk—A Change of Scene—Swadlincote—Pottery Works—Coal and Clay—Weathering—Mashing, Straining, and Boiling—An Improved Process—The Wedging Mill—The Thrower's Wheel—Making Jugs, Cups, and Basins—A Good Day's Work—The Hothouse—In the Lathe—Self-Decoration—Blowing the Bands—Moulding—Handle-making—The Ovens—Seggars—The Firing—Biscuit—The Glazing—Stilts and Spurs—The Gloss-Oven—Convivial Ditty—The Store Rooms—Monster Jugs, Bowls, and Spittoon—Packing-Room—Wages and Wilfulness—A Change for the Better—Flowers and Singing—Stupid Men, Selfish Masters—Sympathy and Prosperity.

THE railway from Birmingham to Derby runs for the most part through a pastoral district; along the valley of the Tame on the edge of Warwickshire, and when we come to Castle Bromwich, a village pleasantly situate on a rising bank of trees, the leagues of rolling smoke seem to recede farther and farther on our left, until our sunshine is that of ripening fields and broad green meadows. Then we get a glimpse of Drayton manor on the left, once the residence of the statesman who re-invented the income-tax, and set the seal to

the national determination to have free-trade in bread: then we fly across that ancient highway—Watling Street, and Tamworth appears grouped on the confluence of Anker and Tame, an old town, where the kings of Mercia held their court and Queen Ethelfleda built a castle, which shared the common fate when the Normans came. Now we are in Staffordshire; Tame falls presently into Trent, where a long viaduct bestrides the grassy level, and away we go along the broadening vale; far on the left are seen the spires of Lichfield, needle-like; rich meadows and pastures spread before us, divided by the winding river; anon smoke darkens the air, tall chimneys shoot aloft from an irregular mass of houses, and the train stops at the beery town of Burton-upon-Trent.

It is not a pretty or polite town. You note its vocation at once on emerging from the station. I have sometimes seen nearly the whole of the open ground in front thickly-covered with barrels of beer, awaiting their trains. If not these you will see barrel-laden wagons rumbling along from the chief breweries, and stacks of barrels—mountains rather—so prodigiously big, that you will perhaps wonder, as when among the hooks and eyes, where they all go to. Look at the breweries! they correspond in magnitude with the barrel-stacks: that gigantic range, Allsopp's Leviathan Brewery, which overtops its immediate rivals, and cost 40,000*l.*, is but a portion—less than half—of the structure contemplated. Near it stands a little brewery belonging to an enterprising firm in Essex, who thereby acquire for their ale the Burtonian reputation. Whichever way you look you see the appurtenances of brewing; low wagons laden with barrels or sacks of grain; and malthouses, one of which is spacious enough for

the making of more than a thousand quarters of malt at once.

You see proof that bitter ale is but a recent invention in the fresh, new appearance of the buildings on each side of the road leading into the town. To bitter ale Burton owes its rapid increase on a dead, damp level, liable to inundation from the Trent, and where the fogs cling and benumb to a degree that should make a Londoner rejoice in his Novembers. One result, however, of the multiplication of breweries is a dryness of the ground unknown formerly, by the sinking of numerous wells. The abstraction of water from the soil was so great by the brewery-wells from 25 to 30 feet deep in gravel under alluvium, that the ordinary pump-wells of the town were drained and had to be sunk to the same depth.

In pleasing contrast to the level, Scalpley Hill, rising precipitously and thickly-grown with trees, on the farther shore of Trent, overlooks the whole town, and arrests your eye on leaving the station, inspiring you with a desire to survey the prospect from its summit.

Walking in my youthful days from Leeds to Birmingham, I passed through Burton. Bitter ale was not then thought of, and the town, about half its present size, let the Trent pour into its cellars whenever the stream felt frolicsome, and muddled itself with beer by way of solace. Besides beer-drinking, the community, at that time, indulged in a practice, which was long the reproach of Edinburgh; but by daylight and without the cry of 'gardy loo!' that warned passers-by in the Scottish metropolis. And worse: when cesspools were emptied, the contents were shot into the street to taint the air and impede

the thoroughfare, until shovelled into the cart. And this noisome practice prevailed in later years, as witnessed by a friend of mine who resided for awhile in the benighted town. "Bless ye! it's beautiful stuff to fertilize Swedlecut common," said a well-inured native to him one day when he complained of the sickening smell.

Since then a party of my relatives, having to pass a few hours in the town, inquired of a tradesman standing at his door where the best ale was to be found. "You go to the *Proud Teeler*," he answered, "that's the best. I drinks five quarts a day on't, and I ought to know."

The sign here mentioned was not the one indicated. I substitute this to show the name—Proud tailor—by which the goldfinch is known in the neighbourhood.

You will soon become aware of the strange dialect that prevails in this corner of Staffordshire. "Mr. Kewk I want a bewk," is an example of the transformation that Cook and book undergo. "Let me have one with a red hillin," said a young lady seeking a hymn-book; all unaware that *haelan* in the speech of her Mercian forefathers meant *a cover*. You may hear the word also in Birmingham. "Haf-past eet," the *a* sounded as in fat, represents the half-past eight of people who speak English. "Aw'm welly clemm'd," signifies, I'm well-nigh starved; and the ancient asseveration still exists in "Na, by'r leddy, a' wunna," —No! by Our Lady, I won't. Sing, bring, and such-like words are pronounced with the *g* hard, as in pig; and it may be that the lady who helps you to a "few soup," will after a ladlefull of solids from the bottom of the tureen hospitably inquire if "you would like a little of the slop." These instances, but a few out of many, are interesting as vestiges of the ancient speech

of Mercia and of local custom, and will perhaps suffice to convey a notion of the vernacular. A Burtonian would once argue with me that his was the proper pronunciation, and that of the counties nearer London improper.

The friend above referred to, once heard a Christmas carol sung in the vernacular; and with that I take leave for awhile of peculiarities of speech. It is written as pronounced: *e* or *ee* as *ay*; *a*, *i*, and *y* as *o*; *u* and *o* as *oo*; and *who* as *hew*.

"As Oi sot on a sunny bonk,
A sunny bonk, a sunny bonk,
As Oi sot on a sunny bonk
On Christmas dee in t' mornin';
Oi saw thray ships coom seelin' boy,
Coom seeling boy, coom seelin' boy,
Oi saw thray ships coom seelin' boy
On Christmas dee in t' mornin'.

And hew should bay in thase thray ships,
In thase thray ships, in thase thray ships,
And hew should bay in thase thray ships?
But Juseph and his fair leddy.
And hay did whistle and shay did sing,
And all the bells on airth did ring,
For joy that the Saviour, hay was bawn,
On Christmas dee in t' mornin'."

Although July is not a brewing-month, the sight of Bass' brewery is astonishing, so enormous is the scale of operations:—I saw coppers big enough to boil a good-sized whale, and coolers big enough for the serving up of half a dozen whales, mashtubs big enough for a guardhouse; and, on an upper floor, the mills, from which the ground malt is shot down, six thousand bushels or more for a single brewing. Hence we may say that Bass and Co. clear two hundred acres of barley every night during the brewing season.

The tun-room, occupying half an acre, will contain a thousand barrels at once. The stock of casks required for the home trade is about two hundred and fifty thousand; and fifty thousand for the foreign trade, which are sold with the ale. Twelve clerks are constantly employed in keeping the accounts of returned casks: the number of men employed throughout the establishment is more than eight hundred, besides seventy horses, and drays, wagons, and carts in proportion. To keep the horses in good condition they are fed on steamed hay.

Trade dislikes hindrances, and ingenuity has been set to work to make brewing possible in hot weather. I saw a large refrigerator so fitted with spiral partitions and cold-water pipes, that the wort flowing in is sufficiently cooled by the time it arrives at the centre. But this is an experiment, and as yet ingenuity has something more to do before the appliances of cooling will be available in the dog-days.

Bass and Company's works extend, with a few breaks, from one extremity of the town to the other, covering in all more than twenty acres: an extent suggestive of much besides brewing. The pumping, grinding and mashing employ powerful machinery; coppersmiths and other workers in metal contribute largely towards the fittings; and the cooperage uses every year an almost incredible quantity of oaken staves and iron hoops. At the time of my visit the making of casks by machinery had been commenced; but, as owing to some want of facility in the mechanical contrivances, a machine-made cask cost more than one made by hand, I was not permitted to see that portion of the works.

Brewing profits by the advance of science, as well as other branches of trade; the process is now conducted

from beginning to end on strict scientific principles, and every important brewery reckons a competent chemist among its staff. Burton brews every year many million gallons of beer, and consumes no inconsiderable portion of the thirty-three million bushels of malt, and fifty-three million pounds of hops, which, according to the returns for 1858, are the annual produce of England. The quantity of beer exported in the same year from the United Kingdom, 517,260 barrels, was valued at 1,802,646*l.*

Now let us go and take our recreation in a climb on the hill. There is the bridge to be crossed, and a wonderful bridge it is, of six-and-thirty arches, and fifteen hundred feet long, and as irregular in form as any lover of the picturesque could desire. It retains, moreover, all the obstructive narrowness of the olden time, curves deeply as if bent downwards by the force of the stream, and bestrides an island or two in its course. When Edward the Second surprised and routed the Earl of Lancaster here on the levels in 1320, a murderous attack was made on the defenders of the bridge by the royal forces. Three hundred years later, Lieut. Col. Tyldesley was knighted by Charles the First, for his advance across the bridge, and "desperate storming" of the town.

From the farther end of the bridge the road to Ashby-de-la-Zouch is seen mounting the ascent: we turn to the right along the river bank under overhanging trees, and presently discover the approach to Scalpley. A few minutes more and we can sit down in a breezy shade and survey the landscape. In the distance stretches the district of Needwood Forest, where patches of timber, and a few venerable trees

remain to tell of the former sylvan dominion, and present a back-ground to the flat lands, with Tutbury prominent among the woody undulations. Far to the right extends the vale of Trent, and a walk along the meadows in that direction will bring us to the viaduct by which Brindley carried the Grand Trunk canal across the river. Before us lies the town, separated from the stream by 'The Hay,' a broad pasture, used as a public walk, and now we can see in the long ranges of red brick walls, and large breadths of slated roofs, how considerably the sixteen breweries contribute to the size of the borough. Burton had a reputation for ale even in the days of the Crusades; some historians tell us that it was a brewer of Burton who on the occasion of Babington's conspiracy, conveyed information to Queen Mary, then a prisoner in Tutbury castle; and the stout Earl of Essex mentions Burton in one of his letters, as a town "consisting only of clothyers and maulsters." And this long-enjoyed reputation it is earnest to maintain.

The view of the churchyard derives a sentiment from the weeping willows that border it on the brink of the stream. Nothing now remains of the original church dedicate to St. Modwen, one of the holy maidens who went forth from Ireland, in the days of King Ethelwulf, and having cured the king's son of a grievous distemper, was rewarded with lands and privileges. She built a chapel to St. Andrew on the island opposite the churchyard, and there tradition says she was buried. The chroniclers mention the place as Andressey—Andrew's ey, or islet—now corrupted into Annesleys; and the reach of the river that separates it from the shore, is still known as the Modwens. The present church dates from 1720: it has a good altar-piece

of white marble, and one of clever old Snetzler's organs.

Adjoining the churchyard are the abbey-grounds, and the scanty remains of what was once the stately Abbey of Burton—a portion of a doorway, and window, some scattered stones, the gray old garden walls, the entrance gateway and porter's lodge, in which a blacksmith has for some time plied his trade. Did the cellarer, when looking at his barrels, ever dream of the days to come, when abbeys would be succeeded by breweries wherein a man may stand and repeat wonderingly what Johnson said of that brewery in Southwark, that there is "the potentiality of growing rich beyond the dreams of avarice?"

But time will not tarry for our musing: we will walk a little farther along the road to Stapenhill, and thence look up the valley beyond the ford where King Edward crossed to circumvent his rival. Then while mounting to the summit of Scalpley, we will remember that Burton has improved as well as other places: has a Natural History and Literary Society, with a good ornithological museum, has made itself decent by sewerage, supports a savings bank, and as many chapels and schools as suffice for its wants.

Our walk leads us across a hilly country by pleasant field-paths which open to us views of this southern extremity of Derbyshire. All around us is rural, and ere long the path descends to a secluded hollow, watered by a little brook. Then another rise, and at the top we cross an avenue of trees, down which the lord of the manor used to walk: now it is the approach to a farm. Hence the view changes: the rural gives place to the coaly and smoky, and we come presently to the mouth of a busy coalpit. Now the roads and

paths are black: more smoke appears in the prospect, the black diversified here and there by clouds of pale smoke; the ground is bare and ragged in places, shewing where clay-diggers have been at work; our path winds strangely in and out among miners' cottages, every step brings us nearer to a group of fuming pottery ovens, and, about four miles from Burton, we come to the pottery village of Swadlincote: the Swedlecut mentioned a few pages back.

Here I was in familiar quarters, and among friends, whose hospitality compensates for the inevitable ugliness of a crockeryware neighbourhood. However, one has not to go far for pleasant walks: there is a large circular mound to be seen at Gresley, which has very much the appearance of an ancient British tomb; and in the opposite direction, Lord Chesterfield's park incloses and commands views of delightful scenery.

As I shall stay here long enough to renew my acquaintance with the art and mystery of the potter, I trust, reader, that you will not feel disinclined to be my companion the while. There are many things less worth taking note of than the making of jugs, dishes, and teapots.

If it is fortunate for the Black Country that the limestone, ironstone and coal lie so conveniently together, so is it fortunate for this part of Derbyshire that coal and clay form deposits easy of access; the one ready for the utilization of the other. The clay is of that fat, marly nature which potters like, containing a sufficiency of what is scientifically termed "the plastic element," and is found in thick beds at from ten to two hundred and fifty feet below the surface, immediately beneath a seam of coal. Imbedded therein the curious eye may discover indications of its

origin in vegetable fragments apparently of reeds and rushes, with scattered impressions of small leaves beautifully distinct. When some years ago, the diggers began the 'getting' of one of the uppermost clay-beds, the usual overlying seam of coal was missing, to the surprise of the neighbourhood, until traces were found shewing that at some remote time, of which no one could venture to guess, it had been dug away, probably for fuel.

The clay, when freshly 'got' is not in a suitable condition for its purpose, but must be mellowed by exposure to the weather in broad shallow heaps for a few months. These heaps, rough layers of dirt in appearance, may be reckoned among the unprepossessing features of the neighbourhood, and without abatement, for no sooner is one removed than another takes its place, as the supply must never fail. The gray colour becomes clearer under the weathering, and the several lumps open and crack, and for the most part, as the workmen say, "fall to pieces." When in this condition it is thrown into a vat and mashed with water (at some works, by the aid of machinery,) until reduced to the proper degree of fluidity and smoothness for passing through remarkably fine sieves, woven of silk threads about three hundred and fifty to the inch. This extreme fineness is essential for the separation of grit and other coarse matters which diminish the plasticity of the clay, and the quality of the future ware. Once through the sieves, the 'slip,' as the liquefied clay is called, appears smooth as cream in the large brick cistern, and is thence pumped into the 'kiln,' which may be described as a pan, fifty, or more, feet in length, five feet wide, and one foot deep, constructed with fire-places and flues underneath for heat-

ing. The number of these pans depends on the extent of the works; but whether few or many, the operation for which they are employed is the same. You enter a long low shed between steaming pans, and see the clay slowly heaving and bubbling, the object being simply to get rid of the water, no other process being so suitable and effectual as evaporation; and when this is complete the clay remains surprisingly tenacious.

About three months after the visit here recorded, an improvement was made in the method of evaporation, which promises to be highly advantageous. Instead of the kiln above described, an iron pan is used, with a double bottom, forming an air-tight chamber, into which steam is admitted by a pipe connected with the boiler of the steam-engine. The results of the first trials astonished the manufacturers themselves: the clay was neither soiled by smoke nor ashes, nor burnt to the bottom as in the old way, and four times the former quantity could be made in the day. In other words, the time required was reduced from twenty-four hours to six hours; only one ton of coal was consumed instead of eight tons, and that single one was burnt under the boiler of the steam-engine which supplies power to the works.

It will be well to explain here, that the pottery made in the Swadlincote district is chiefly yellow ware; a kind which is commonly regarded as the cheapest and least ornamental of all. We shall however see that in this case the cheap is not necessarily the despicable, and that yellow ware figures largely in the crockery-trade. That there is no mystery in the ingredients is obvious; but for superior kinds of ware and for porcelain there must be a mixture of clays with the addition of a vitreous flux.

The clay, being now ready for use, is dug from the 'kiln' by the slip-maker, and thrown into the 'pug-mill,' or 'wedging-mill,' a large upright cylinder, in which it is forced or screwed gradually downwards, and extruded at the bottom in a continuous cubical mass, from which large lumps of uniform size are cut off by a wire, and these lumps are conveyed into the work-shops. The introduction of the pug-mill a few years ago, afforded an opportunity for an illustration of human nature in the Potteries: the men, as is still the case in many works, had been accustomed to form the lumps of clay by spade and hand, and murmured at the mill as an invasion of their privileges, notwithstanding that it saved them from a very laborious task. The mill, however, continued to work, and in time convinced the men of their stupidity; and now, if a man were ordered to 'wedge' his own clay, his answer would be "Aw'll stroike first."

We pass to the shop where the 'throwers' are at work, and while admiring the operations, may roam in imagination back to the primeval days, for the thrower represents the very infancy of art, working now with the same essential appliances as were used in Egypt four thousand years ago, if we may believe the testimony of hieroglyphic monuments. And if the fragment of pottery lately found deep underground in the valley of the Nile, be really, as some geologists suppose, fourteen thousand years old, and the most ancient document in the world, how mysteriously venerable the potter's art becomes. Our household words include the 'potter's-wheel' as a not unfamiliar term, and now we see one before us, not a pretty object, which among workmen is called the 'thrower's-wheel.' It includes a bench, through the top of which passes a vertical shaft sup-

porting a stout horizontal disk of wood, about a foot in diameter. The shaft is made to rotate by a strap from a large wheel turned by a lad, or, in some instances the thrower's wife, and the disk rotates therewith as rapidly as may be desired. Large establishments in the Potteries employ steam-power.

Besides the hand at the large wheel, the thrower is helped by a boy or woman, who makes up his supplies of clay, and carries out his work. Sitting on a low seat on the top of his bench, he takes a lump of clay, throws it down on the centre of the disk, then while it whirls, fashions it into any required form by a few touches of thumb and finger. Under his manipulation the shapeless mass grows, so to speak, into a jug, or jar, dwarfs itself to a cup, or spreads out as a basin. The process looks so easy that ambitious visitors have expressed a wish to try their hand, feeling sure of success; and have been let to try, to their own disappointment and the merriment of all beholders, for they found it impossible even to throw down the lump of clay properly. It seems, however, but pastime to the thrower, as, moistening his hands at times in water, he draws up the clay between them, shaping the inside with one hand, and the outside with the other at the same time. Jugs, pitchers, and such like articles, appear at first as if they were to be upright jars, but before you are aware the swell is produced in one part, and the contraction in another, and with the accuracy acquired by long practice. The gauge, which resembles a small wooden gibbet, having a long projecting moveable arm, set to the required height, is applied to every article, and thus uniformity of size is maintained by exact measurement. So the work goes merrily on: the big wheel turning, the boys running

to and fro; and some notion of their activity may be formed from the fact that a thrower with two runners has been known to make from sixty to seventy dozen articles in a day. One element of this rapid manufacture is, the condition of the man's hands: when in steady work they have all the essential smoothness and flexibility; but should he be kept idle from a strike, or illness, he finds his hands on resuming work unadapted to their task for the first few days. Although, as above remarked, his appliances are not pretty, owing to the bespattering with clay, you will feel no little gratification in watching his workmanship; and when you observe how the clay, by not being elastic as well as plastic, retains even the slightest impression made upon it, you will almost fancy that Nature takes pleasure in playing into the workman's hands.

Immediately after shaping, the articles are cut from the wheel by a wire, jugs having as yet neither spout nor handle, and are carried away to the 'hot-house,' where jugs, basins, and the like are placed in one room, plates, dishes, and the articles made in moulds in another. The things from the wheel are sufficiently stiffened in a few hours, the moulded things are left a night and a day to dry, ranged on tiers of shelves, and exposed to the heat rising from flues beneath the floor, combined with active ventilation. This ventilation is another of the recent innovations, which the men liked as little as the pug-mill; they had always been used to dry their dishes standing on edge in a close room, and it stood to reason that their way was the best, notwithstanding that dishes lost their true shape while hanging by a damp side: 'twas the old way. But the horizontal position and free circulation of air have triumphed as

the pug-mill did; and double the former quantity can now be dried in the same space.

When sufficiently stiff to bear handling, by which time they are of a lively slate colour, the thrown articles pass into the turner's hands, for skilful as a thrower may be, he cannot give the finishing touches, or shape the bottom of his articles. But the turner fixing them in the lathe, uses a short blade of soft iron as chisel, fetches off continuous shavings, as if the clay were soft wood, smooths the surfaces whether inside or out, cuts the mouldings clean, and so prepares every article that can be fixed in a lathe for further treatment. He has a woman, or his wife to work the treadle, and she, attentive to his movements, takes a considerable share in the work. Without neglecting the treadle she trims and decorates the articles as he separates them from the chuck: as if but one thought actuated the two. By a mere touch of a brush, dipped in an infusion of hops, she produces those curious moss-like patches so often seen on common yellow ware; and the touch suffices, for the fluid spreads of itself into the fantastic ramifications and knots. Hops have been substituted for tobacco, because the men sometimes cheated the infusion in favour of their pipes; and in the days when the infusion was made in gin the opportunity for tasting was not lost. The coloured bands are put on while the article is still spinning round in the lathe, by means of an utensil resembling a closed teapot with two spouts—one opposite the other. From one of the spouts projects a Lilliputian Pan-pipes made of quills; the pot itself contains a liquid colour, and the turner having placed it on his rest, applies the quills to the jug or basin, blows through the spout nearest to him, and thereby forces the colour out upon the clay, and

produces a coloured stripe for every quill. With three or four pots, each containing a different colour, and a proper adjustment of the quills, he can blow his bands and strings at pleasure.

Some varieties of plates and basins are finished with a wavy edge while in the lathe, by the application of a tool to the mandril for a few seconds, which, as workmen say, throws it out of gear; in other words, imparts a wobbling motion; the basin wobbles also against the turner's chisel, and the wavy edge is cut with as much facility as the straight one. In making some kinds of large basins, the rim is formed with the rest, and the rounded ring or foot at the bottom is put on after the bowl itself is made, the boys cutting the strips of clay in readiness for the man. Dishes are made by the 'dish-makers' on moulds of gypsum, an absorbent material which facilitates drying; and as the moulds remain in the hothouse until the drying is complete, a large number must be provided to maintain a continuous supply. Many articles, including jugs and basins, are made in double moulds, octagonal, polygonal, or circular, and the two halves are joined before drying: handles, lids, and spouts are also made in moulds. In fact, a whole book might be written in description of all the potter's ingenious devices. Their general character will perhaps be understood from the foregoing particulars.

When the turner has finished his task, the spouts and handles are affixed to the articles that require them. Let us see how the handles of common jugs are made: the iron box of a screw-press is filled with clay, the lever is pulled, and out from the bottom of the box shoots a strip of clay three or four feet long, shaped by the orifice through which it passes into

the required form. Strips varying from half an inch to an inch in width, and with slightly rounded surfaces, as must be familiar to all readers, are producible one after another, in any quantity, shooting straight down from the bottom of the box, maintaining their form unbroken by reason of the tenacity of the clay. They are cut into suitable lengths, and bent into the shape of handles, and set aside to stiffen with the articles to which they are to be fitted. Then the workman trims the ends, flattens the surfaces of contact, moistens them slightly with water or dilute slip, and so sticks them on to the jug, cup, pan, or dish-cover. Spouts are attached in the same way, and a very slight attachment it seems; but there is fire in prospect, and that will so perfect the union that nothing short of destruction will ever weaken it, as we all know.

Imagine now some thousands of dishes, plates, cups, jugs, and basins ready for the fire, while we walk across the yard to the ovens, as the gigantic cones are called, in which clay is converted into crockery or porcelain, as the case may be. The cone itself, that which meets the eye in a Pottery landscape, is nothing more than a shell, within which the oven, circular in form, and twenty or thirty feet high, and with fireplaces in its base, are built up. Between it and the foot of the cone, there is a clear passage-way all round, about three feet wide, and if you wish to test your courage and powers of endurance, take a walk round after the fires have been blazing for twelve or fifteen hours. A doorway, which must be carefully bricked up when the oven is charged, gives access to the interior.

How is it, you will ask, that if crockery has been through the fire it never looks smoky? and the answer is: because means are taken to protect it from the

direct action of the fire; and to the way in which this is accomplished we must now bestow a few moments' attention. In wandering about the premises we may already have remarked numbers of round and oval pans, which may be likened to foot-pans, except that they are very rough and coarse in appearance. These things are 'seggars,' made of fire-clay mixed with marl, the porosity of which renders it eminently suitable for the purpose; and in these the manufactured articles are placed to be baked, or in potters' phrase 'fired.' Some articles must have a seggar to themselves, but the small ware, plates, cups, and basins, are packed in as many as possible, and as the seggars are filled they are carried to the oven, and there piled one on the other in regular close columns until the charge is complete, and by that time there are two thousand seggars in a pile, which will remind you dimly of something you may have read concerning labyrinthine architecture. The lowermost seggars are commonly made thicker and stronger than the upper, the better to bear the weight; yet it sometimes happens that one gives way, or the supports fail, and down fall the columns, breaking everything, as an Irishman would say, to smithereens.

The stock of seggars required to keep four ovens going is ten thousand: they are made on the premises, and as the loss by breakage is from three hundred to four hundred a week, there is steady work for seggar makers. Like as in the manufacture of crucibles, old seggars ground to powder are mixed with the new clay.

When the oven is filled, the doorway is bricked up, the fires are lighted, and in a few hours the whole pile is in a glowing red heat, which is maintained from forty to fifty hours. Then follows a gradual cooling without

any admission of the external air, and when the seggars are brought out the ware has changed its hue from gray to a delicate cream or cane colour, has a bell-like ring when struck, and is in the technical condition of 'biscuit.' The oven in which it has been fired is called the 'biscuit oven.'

Notwithstanding that the clay is hardened, and the pores are contracted by the firing, it is in, so to speak, a state of greediness for moisture, highly favourable to the process of glazing. The glaze is a wash prepared in different ways according to the nature of the articles to be dipped; but the ingredients are lead in some of its forms, silica, alumina, protoxide of iron, calcined Cornish granite, and other substances. These being properly ground, are mixed with water in a large tub, composing a wash, which is stirred from time to time to prevent subsidence; or a small quantity of vinegar is thrown in, that fluid having the remarkable property of holding the glaze in suspension; and into this the biscuit is dipped in a certain definite manner. The rule is, that the portion of the article which enters first shall come out first, so that each portion shall receive the same amount of glaze; hence the man dips a plate with his right hand and passing it horizontally through the wash takes it out with his left hand. Should fingermarks remain, it is the practice in glazing the best kinds of ware, to touch them with a sponge, as also to apply the glaze with a brush to any parts that require it.

On the quality of the glaze, the usefulness and beauty of earthenware, as also of porcelain, mainly depend. As the skin to the body, so should the glaze adapt itself to all the various conditions in which the utensils coated thereby, may be placed. A jug dipped

in hot water will expand with the heat, and the glaze must expand with it, or 'craze,' as the potters say. Who does not know that tea-cups may be filled twice a day for years with liquid but a little below the boiling temperature, and yet retain their glassy surface unblemished? When the glaze presents the appearance of a network, with multiplicity of cracks, as is often seen on the very commonest earthenware, especially in France, we may be sure that no pains have been taken to prepare a quality such as will identify itself completely with the clay which it was intended to protect.

The glazed articles are packed once more into seggars, but not so closely as before, for wherever they touch, they would closely adhere after the second firing. Basins are still placed within basins, and plates within plates, but are held separate by 'stilts' and 'spurs,' which may be described as a sort of small tripod having extremities armed above and below with a fine pyramidal point, so that the tripod always rests on three pointed feet, and presents three similar points to the article placed above it. The stilts and spurs are made of fireclay, in moulds, and are as much in request as the seggars, and when fired appear to be as hard as metal. By their means, as is easy to comprehend, the points of contact are reduced to such a degree of fineness, that a scarcely perceptible trace is left on the glaze.

The 'gloss-oven,' or 'glost-oven' as the men call it, also contains about two thousand seggars. They are piled and fired in the same way as in the biscuit-oven; but one small opening is left in the brickwork, through which the fireman can examine his 'trials'—small rings of dark-brown clay, manufactured expressly for the

purpose. These are placed within the oven, sharing in the general heat, and are drawn out for examination after about twenty-four hours, when their colour reveals to a practised eye the state of things inside, and the firing is stopped or continued accordingly. As above-mentioned, the biscuit-oven is left to cool gradually; not so the gloss-oven, for when the trials show that the proper moment has come, the fires are drawn, the screen of brickwork is pulled from the doorway, and in rushes the atmosphere at pleasure upon the glowing mass. A similar sudden intrusion into the biscuit-oven would crack every article in the seggars.

Long before an unaccustomed person could endure the heat, the men enter the oven, bring out the seggars; and the ware, which is no longer cane-colour but yellow, is carried to the store-rooms. Sometimes, stimulated by a desire to get through their work early, or a pressing order, they brave a temperature in which only the Fire-king could pretend to feel comfortable; and without, so far as can be judged of, injury to their health. If any part of their employment justifies recourse to the solace recommended in the potters' drinking-catch of the olden time, it is that. I once heard the ditty in my boyhood, but remember only the words.

"Our trade to work in clay began,
Ere the first man was made;
For out of clay was made this man,
And thus began our trade.
Since man is but an earthern jug,
This jug then let us fill;
And this to compass, jolly boys,
Good liquor welcome still."

After all, it seemed to me that a truer notion of the prodigious extent of the manufacture was derivable

from a sight of the store-rooms, than from the former operations. You traverse room after room, between such amazing piles of crockery-ware, as you never before imagined, advancing in places so far across the floor as to leave scarcely room to pass. Hundreds of thousands of articles all ready for sale and export! And now you see specimens of yellow ware, which vie with what have been considered the superior sorts in design and finish. Tea-cups, white inside, of as 'classic' a form as you could desire, and convenient withal, from which we may hope many a family group will sip their souchong. Vases, and wash-table furniture, imitative of Sienna marble, the veins and tints having been produced by a process to be hereafter described; and it may be that you will go away preferring yellow ware to any other. A few paces farther, and you will wonder who are the Brobdingnags destined to use the enormous jugs which stand on the floor, each big enough to contain ten gallons; or the proportionately big bowls forming part of the same lot. The negro mind is expansive: these things are for the West Coast of Africa. What a generous stream could be poured from those spouts, while the bowls, which are white inside and fitted with lids, rival in size the Neptunes that we saw at the Battery. And what huge seggars they must have required for their firing!

There are piles of brown ware as well as yellow, among which are coffee-pots and tea-pots of elegant form, and beautiful glaze. The principal ingredient of this brown ware is the red ferruginous clay, found in many parts of the adjacent coal-fields. With this is combined a small proportion of the clay which is so largely dug in the neighbourhood of Poole, and differences of tint are producible by the addition of umber

or oxides of iron. The colour being a disguise for tobacco-juice, brown spittoons are manufactured by thousands for export to the United States; and the piles of these things are among the largest in the store-rooms; for sometimes fifty crates-full are shipped to a single order. In a former visit here, I saw a monster specimen, which it was proposed to call the *Congressional Spittoon*, in the hope that it might supersede the wooden boxes with a sod at the bottom, which used to stand in the lobbies of the Capitol at Washington to receive the expectorations of republican legislators.

Most of the ugly crockery is taken by Brother Jonathan and the Canadians; for settlers out west, and up in the bush, prefer the least beautiful as most compatible with their necessity for roughing it. There is one kind of yellow tea-pot which makes me laugh every time I see it, so ludicrously ugly is its appearance. No English hawker, careful of his reputation, would carry such a thing. And over-sea peculiarities are shown in heaps of articles manufactured for export, which are never taken into use in England.

We complete our survey with a walk through the packing-room, where the crates packed in a year may be reckoned by thousands, and the straw that is used, by stacks. Who will complain that the commonest yellow ware is dear, when a crate-full can be got for thirty shillings? Perhaps cheapness has something to do with the backwoods' preference. And our insight into curiosities of trade is finished off by the discovery that among potters a dozen may mean a number which is very far from twelve: for instance, one big jug is reckoned as a dozen, and thirty-six little ones the same; and so with other articles; the reason being

that dealers in crockery make out their invoices on a uniform scale of prices; and as the thirty-six and the one are equal in price, each parcel is reckoned as a dozen. The same rule, allowing for differences of price, applies to the intermediate sizes.

According to their task and ability, the men here earn from eighteen to forty shillings a week; the women from seven to ten shillings; the boys a smaller amount; hence the united earnings of four or six members of one family make up a considerable sum. If ability to earn involved a habit of economy, the condition of the neighbourhood would be better than it is.

In one particular—that of mischievous stupidity—these workpeople match the unwise thousands of London, who went out on strike at word of command. They are eager to work when trade is slack, and inclined to dawdle when they know that employers are at their wits' end to make up pressing orders. Among themselves they are bound by tyrannical trade-regulations, yielding thereto an obedience which they refuse to the moral law, and with a construction that keeps all the workmen of an establishment at the same dead level. They themselves apportion the work, and carefully prevent the expert workman from earning more than the bungler. If a turner, for example, should prove to be quick and clever, and able to work with spirit, he is compelled to give up all the benefit of his superior skill, because it would not be fair for him to do more than the drone who makes a hard day's work of that which the other accomplishes in three hours. What a sorry specimen of the love of fair-play said to be born with every Englishman! Why should a potter strive to cultivate his mind; to improve his workmanship, to economise his means, if he is to be

met by the depressing and worrying opposition of his own comrades?

O, stupid English workman! how much longer will you answer to the Wise Man's description:—"He never openeth his mouth but he speaketh like a fool."

Happily, not for ever. Swadlincote has changed for the better, materially and morally, since my first visit. The drinking habit, the indifference to propriety in house and person, the dread of the savings bank, kept alive by a suspicion that workman's economy would be master's opportunity to cut down wages, are no longer so powerful as they were. The population of the district, which includes the villages of Newhall and Woodville, is about five thousand: more than three hundred children attend the Sunday-school in Swadlincote; many of the cottages have the appearance of comfortable homes, and little gardens beautify the once rubbishy waste. Love of flowers, one of the improving indications, creates a competition for garden plots, and has led to the formation of a Horticultural Society which already enjoys so much local reputation, that three thousand people came to the show. Another indication of improvement is the establishment of a choral society, which cultivates the love of singing, long manifested by the villagers, as the preachers at the church and chapel can testify. The Hutchinson family came hither during their tour in England, and while viewing the works one happened to say as they mounted to the store-room landing: "This would be a good place to sing from." Immediately, no one knew how, word went round that the visitors were going to sing, and the throwers left their wheels, the turners their lathes, the 'mould-runners' forsook their post, and in a twinkling the quadrangle was filled by men,

women, and boys, whose eager looks betrayed their fulness of expectation. They were not disappointed; for standing there under the blue sky, the four minstrels sang one of their spirit-stirring songs, and a thrill went through the clay-stained crowd as they listened to the harmony, led by the sweet, clear voice of the New-England maiden. What a delightful interruption to a life-long routine among the pots.

But there is something to be said on the other side, for masters can be stupid and selfish as well as men. If one invents a new pattern, others who can't invent straightway defraud him by manufacturing a base imitation. If one respects the sentiment, Live and let live, and pays his hands full money wages, another will pay in beer and groceries, and require the workmen to live in his cottages, so that he may deduct the rent from their wages. Some 'pot-works,' it is said, are only made to pay by the shop and public-house. One employer gave his tenants to understand that he would supply them with bacon, as well as flour and groceries: hence the balance of wages receivable was very small, and that was too often intercepted by another of the family who sold beer. With all their stupidity working-people feel how much they are wronged in these matters, and we cannot wonder that they are suspicious and mistrustful of the masters. Moreover they see that in one of the adjacent collieries no person connected therewith is permitted to keep a beer-shop or store.

After all, it is well that the English workman can get beef and beer, and well perhaps that he can make pig-headed demonstrations; for otherwise his condition would be worse than it is. The power to strike is an element of good as well as of evil. Judging of masters as a class, not as individuals, we can hardly believe

that of their own accord they would have taken measures to ameliorate the condition of their workmen. Their motives have been inspired by pressure from without, and acts of parliament. They have yet much to learn as well as the workmen; and the more that henceforth the progress of enlightenment in the two classes shall be simultaneous, the more that confidence and sympathy shall be promoted, the better will it be for their prosperity in every sense of the word.

Swadlincote and its neighbour villages are now lit with gas along the roads for two or three miles in each direction, whereby one of the screens of evil deeds is removed; and it may be that the other light will the sooner ensue.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Gresley — Ashby-de-la-Zouch — Bardon — Charnwood Forest — Hills and Tors—Druid, Roman, Saxon—Famous Places and Famous Names—Forest Primeval—Older and Oldest—Glorious Prospect—A Miserable Companion—Newtown Linford—Birch Wine—Bradgate Park—The Cross on the Rock—To Coalville—An Evening Walk—The Bell—St. Bernard's Abbey—Religious Signs—No Admittance for Women—The Guest-Master—The Church: Compline—Choir Brothers and Lay Brothers—The Guest's Room—Mute Servitor—Conversation between Guest and Guest-Master—A Check—The Rulers of the House—The Abbot's Authority—Guest-Master's Duty—Benedictine Practice—Much Labour and much Prayer—Worldly Wisdom—Spare Diet—The Way to Heaven—The Bedchamber—The Dean's Query.

HALF-AN-HOUR'S walk the following afternoon, brought me to Gresley, a station on the Burton and Leicester railway. Journeying rapidly thence, I got flying glimpses of black industry here and there, amid rural landscapes; of Ashby-de-la-Zouch, with the tall ruin of its ancient castle—the Ivanhoe baths, and pleasure-grounds, where, it may be, that your reminiscences of the Past are enlivened by sight of a gay company practising archery; and presently the train stops at Bardon station.

To the top of Bardon hill is about half-an-hour's walk; a hill scarcely known beyond the contiguous counties, but which affords you a prospect over the midland country of wondrous breadth and distance, and in charm delightful. Immediately beneath lies Charnwood Forest, a district some ten miles long and six

broad, where, although a man can no longer journey for half a day under the thick great shadow of ancient oaks, as in the olden time, there is enough left of the romantic and picturesque to gladden the visitor, and animate the sojourner. Grotesque and weird-like rocks cresting the heights as tors and hanging-stones recall the days of Druid worship, when their altars burned on Cadman, on Sharpley, on Pelder Tor; and here on Bardon—the Hill of Bards—their hymns of praise were sung. Beacon Hill, with its traces of an ancient tower, and earthworks, has blazed with the signal-fires of Briton, Roman, and Saxon. Through the Forest runs the Roman road that led from Ratæ to Derventio. Yonder reddish-brown patch, covered by a pale smoke-cloud, is Leicester, the city founded by Lear; and where fields, and farms, and young plantations now salute the eye, once lay the wild wastes and the leagues of oaks, the beechen glades, the dells fringed with alders, that formed the north-eastern extremity of the great Forest of Arden. Of its opposite extremity, who will need to be reminded that has made the pilgrimage to Stratford-on-Avon?

The change betwixt the now and then is noticed by Drayton, where he sings—

> "The Dryads that were wont about thy lawns to rove,
> To skip from wood to wood, and scud from grove to grove,
> On Sharpley that were seen, and Cadman's ancient rocks,
> Against the rising sun to braid their silver locks,
> And with the harmless elves on heathy Bardon's height,
> By Cynthia's golden beams to play them night by night;
> Exiled their sweet abode, to common bare are fled—
> They with the oaks that lived, now with the oaks are dead."

There Eric the Forester, with his hardy bands, resisted the Norman invader: there the monks found

a dwelling-place, as still testified by ruins and relics of "forlorn Gracedieu," as Wordsworth calls it, and the tower and cloistral fragments of Ulverscroft Priory, situated in a sylvan dale, and now included in the outworks of a farmstead. Here still linger faint traditions of Robin Hood; here have been heard names famous in history: Leicester and Hastings, Comyn and Beaumont, Ferrars and Grey. The seat of the Comyns was in the pleasant dale of Charley, and thence it was that the wife of John Comyn hastened to crown Bruce at Scone, for which exploit king Edward shut her up for six years in a cage at Berwick. Groby recalls the name of Elizabeth Woodville, and if our thought wanders to Mountsorrel, its castle comes to mind as a "devil's nest and den of thieves." At Beaumanor, to the east, a place as pretty as its name, dwelt the Despensers, followed by the Heyricks, kindred of the bard who wrote *Hesperides*. Yonder by the village of Newtown Linford, lies Bradgate Park, where Lady Jane Grey was born, where the mansion of the olden time, a picturesque ruin, stands now draperied with ivy, and the chapel suggests its solemn memories. There, and on the way thither, may still be seen a few huge gnarly trunks, rugged as granite, and almost as bald—relics of the "forest primeval," and things of the Past are found below as well as above the surface: hundreds of coins, a quern, old, old weapons and implements; and older yet, fossils of the dawn-ages, among them one of the fish-lizards in which geologists, turning to the earliest leaves of their great stone-book of revelation, discover a wonderful history.

And the distant prospect. You gaze eastwards, as over the sea, into endless distance, till land and sky meet: northwards the heaving landscape cuts the

horizon with a varied outline, and if the day be clear, is seen rising into the blue summits of the Peak; south-westwards the Malverns appear, and far remote, spied only by keenest eyesight, the tops of Welsh mountains are discernible.

In this expanse we become aware of the general levelness of the heart of England; for Bardon Hill is not more than 852 feet in height. The summit was once used by an astronomer as his observatory; and during the Ordnance Survey it became a highly-important station. Besides the cairn erected by the sappers, a little house stands on the rocky brow well known to picnic parties from the neighbourhood around.

It was some years ago that I first beheld the prospect from Bardon; and rambled on by highway and byeway to Ulverscroft; and halted by Copt Oak, one of the patriarchs; rejoicing in the sunshine which smit my companion so sorely, that, scarcely able to drag his weary limbs along, he begged me to drown him in a wayside pond out of his misery. How at last we came to Newtown Linford, and went among the forest folk, and drank birch-wine—the sap of British birch—and beer that came out of its rock-hewn cellar, with a dew on the jug, and saw Bradgate with its Happy Valley, its woods and waters, and acres of fern, need not be further narrated here. The Past spoke for itself; and the Present made a hospitable demonstration in the person of the head-keeper, who told us that the Earl of Stamford grants free access to all visitors, among whom there come at times troops of dejected stockingers from Leicester, with wives, sweethearts, and children; happy to escape for a few sunshiny hours the wearisome noise of the stocking-loom.

On one of the rocky summits, a large cross catches

the eye from far; and the wayfarer beholding it for the first time, wonders at the appearance of the sacred symbol on the wild, weather-beaten crag. That crag is what the monks of St. Bernard's Abbey call their Calvary; they dwell on the slope beneath it, housed as were the monks of old, and with the like devotedness to prayer and to labour. We sought admission; but the guest-master, a benevolent-looking Irishman, since deceased, represented that certain visitors having misconducted themselves, no stranger could be permitted to view the convent without an introduction. However, on my mentioning that I had the pleasure of acquaintance with one of the professors at Stonyhurst, he yielded, and showed us a small portion of the building and the church. Often has that visit recurred to my mind, and always with a wish that it had given me a sight of the whole establishment and its economy. What did such a place mean? especially in these days when, as a famous author says—"the Gospel of Richard Arkwright once promulgated, no monk of the old sort is any longer possible in this world."

So it happened that when preparing for my tour round the Wrekin, I wrote to the Father Superior, telling him that his convent seemed to me one of the most surprising among the religious phenomena of the present day, and inquiring whether a longer visit than mine had been could be granted to a stranger, giving him at the same time to understand, in common fairness, that in case of an affirmative, I might wish to put my observations into print. The reply, alike prompt and courteous, assured me of a welcome, and the privilege of staying a week if I inclined so to do.

Once more therefore along the railway to Coalville, a village appropriately named, where besides colliery

chimneys, you may see a CAVE ADULLAM, one of the indications very numerous in our day, which show how ready Protestantism is to tolerate anything except Christianity. Thence to the monastery is a walk of about four miles, turning into a bye-road which leads from fertile fields to the bleak uplands of Charnwood. Not so bleak now as when the old rhymer wrote:—

> "Charnwood, if all thy stones were turned to Bread,
> As once the Fiend did such a motion make,
> It would be more than Xerxes fed,
> Or Teneriffe and Ætna both could bake."

Evening was beginning to tint sky and earth with her ruddy amber as I walked up a long ascent between stone fences and heathy slopes, when a bell rang out loud and clear a few measured strokes, and made me aware of my approach to the Abbey, and set me thinking of the times when through all the length and breadth of the land similar pealing sounds reminded all within hearing of the evening prayer and proclaimed rest and hospitality for the wayfarer. Presently more sonorous strokes; and again they were pealed forth a few minutes later, telling that compline had begun, and the monks were singing the *Salve Regina*.

Looking forward from the top of the ascent you see a change of scene, on the left the abbey-grounds skirted by plantations, the verdure of cultivation, and the road stretching away a straight pale stripe till it disappears on a distant brow. The place looks less naked than formerly: a few houses are built near the entrance to the grounds, a lodge stands within the gate, where a board notifies that the COLONY may be viewed; there are more buildings about the grange, among them one somewhat factory-like, overtopping

all the rest; and the abbey itself has enlarged its walls—all since my former visit.

I heard the singing of sonorous bass voices while passing the church on my way to the principal entrance, where a pull at the bell brought the ancient porter, clad in black frock and cowl, from the door of his lodge. I requested him to carry my card to the guest-master, whereupon he retreated by the way he came, admitted me by the great door, motioned me to a seat in the vaulted porch, and departed on his errand.

The religious character of the house is manifest at once. Passages of Scripture taken from the Vulgate meet the eye: "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy House, O Lord," over the gateway; "I was a stranger and ye took me in," above the door; "Come unto me all ye that labour and I will refresh you," on the porter's lodge; "The fashion of this world passeth away," on the wall; *St. Joseph's Room—St. Mary's Room* is written over two of the doors opening from the vestibule; on the outer gate appears a notification that no charge is made for entertainment, and entreating visitors whether Catholic or Protestant to contribute according to their means; on the inner gate opposite, women are notified that for them there is no further ingress. They may peep through the bars into the quadrangle if they will, and wonder at what lies beyond, but foot of theirs will never pace the cloister, notwithstanding that a certain Laureate's fat-faced curate declares:—

> "I say, God made the woman for the man,
> And for the good and increase of the world."

That quadrangle separates the principal portion of

the building, the residence of the monks, from that allotted to the use of guests and visitors. The porch with stone walls, stone floor, groined ceiling, arched windows and doorways, realises a picture which many a one has imagined while wandering about the ancient ruins that beautify our land. How cool, and how silent! for there was no disturbance in the singing heard beyond the quadrangle.

Presently the guest-master came, telling me as he held out his hand, that he had been made aware of my coming, led me forthwith to the guest's-room—*St. Joseph's*—and having asked whether I was Catholic or Protestant, whether I had come on retreat or on a visit, promised a speedy cup of tea, and by his words and manners showed himself a true Benedictine in regard to hospitality. Thinking that he had been summoned from the church on my account, I begged him not to break off his devotions for me, and offered to accompany him; but he complied only after some debate, and my assurance that I was neither very tired nor very hungry. So we walked across the quadrangle, he reminding me that speech was forbidden in the cloister: and in silence we passed along the vaulted passage and entered the church by a door, over which you may read—"Come let us praise the Lord with joy." He led me to the gallery appropriated to guests and seculars at the west end of the choir, where two guests were already kneeling, while the sonorous voices still continued the chanting beneath.

On each side of the choir stood the choir-brothers in their stalls, wearing their ample white frocks with cowls thrown back; and beneath them on each side of the floor stood the lay-brothers in their black frocks. Anon the chanting ceased: the brotherhood knelt, a

voice was heard in supplication, during which the wearers of the black cowls prostrated themselves on the floor. Then the two candles on the altar were put out; the Father Superior struck a slight blow on his desk—the signal for a deep silence, and all sat in meditation until at a second knock they all rose and withdrew one by one at a slow pace, and through their own door. Compline ends at eight o'clock, and finishes their day, and they retire in unbroken silence to their dormitory.

The guest-master beckoned me from the gallery, and we went back to *St. Joseph's Room*, where bread and butter were placed on the table ready for my repast; a black-frocked lay-brother brought in the teapot, saluting me with a slight bend of the head as he entered, but speaking not a word. Indeed, as Brother Stephen told me, not a tongue would wag in the whole building, save his and mine, before the morning.

The room with its mullioned windows looking out upon the shrubbery, is sufficiently cheerful. In one corner stands a large plaster image of the Virgin and Child, flanked by two large candles; pictures of sacred subjects hang on the walls; a case of stuffed birds is instructively ornamental, and there are books for perusal and for sale. On a border under the ceiling run the phrases, "Hospitality do not forget, for by this, some being not aware of it, have entertained angels."—"The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but justice and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."

Whatever may have been the state of things in other parts of the abbey, silence was by no means maintained between me and Brother Stephen, as we shall both

perhaps long remember. Our tongues were not idle. Having made him aware of the motives of my visit, and begged him not to be offended if to make my meaning clear, I spoke out plainly the thought that was in me, I asked why it was that men living in the nineteenth and not in the twelfth century, should think it desirable to revive an institution which, however suitable to the days when a Saint's dry bone would work miracles, seems strangely out of place in an age which puts monkish miracles to shame by its electric telegraph.

"The world has its snares and temptations," answered Brother Stephen, "and if we can avoid them by shutting up ourselves from the world, we do a right thing, and gain merit in the sight of God."

"Is that a sufficient reason? It seems to me narrow-minded and selfish, not to say cowardly, for fifty men to shut themselves up as you do for fear of being tempted. True manhood is better shown by overcoming the tempter in open conflict than by making a shield of stone walls."

"You mistake. There is nothing selfish or cowardly in preferring thoughts fixed constantly on heaven to the distractions of the world. Besides, the seclusion is a more immediate way to God's favour."

"Which implies that a man living in the world cannot exercise self-control, or expect a fair share of grace. Do you really believe Brother Stephen, that a man is the fitter for heaven by reason of making himself uncomfortable?"

"Yes: he gets solid virtue by such a life, and gains merit."

"How can that be? Is not a fasting man more likely to be tempted and harassed by visions of beef-

steaks, than one who eats a rational dinner, and does not feel uncomfortable?"

The guest-master smiled as he answered,—"We never think of beefsteaks here, for we know that we should not get them. And though fasting is at first a sore trial, it ceases in time to be painful."

"Where then is the merit?"

"The merit is there all the same. Merit is got by mortification."

"Do you think that God cares whether you fast or not?"

"No doubt of it. It is meritorious to fast, and gains His favour."

"What you say seems to me preposterous. If a man does what is right he only does his duty, and there is nothing especially meritorious in doing one's duty."

"A man gets merit by avoiding the temptations which lead him aside from his duty; and the more temptations are avoided the more merit."

"Until at last he achieves enough for his own salvation, and may perhaps have some to spare for the saving of others, as is told of certain of your saints! Do you really believe that?"

"The church declares it."

"But the church may be wrong."

"We hold the church to be infallible.'

I felt sorry when the guest-master said this, as it put an end to discussion either from the philosophical or the religious point of view; and was a falling back on that essential characteristic of Roman Catholicism, which, as is said, supersedes reason, and prejudges all matters by the application of irrational dogmas.

The phenomenon was still a mystery to me, however

it was perhaps best to wait patiently for enlightenment, and meanwhile converse on other matters. There was something strangely significant in hearing the guest-master speak of the Prior and Sub-Prior, the Father Master of the Novices, the Infirmarian and others, all under the rule of the Father Superior, or Reverend Father, as he is commonly termed. As in the olden time, so now: the Superior's rule, while accordant with Benedictine principles, is absolute: he can appoint whomsoever he will to the several offices; Brother Stephen had been appointed guest-master six months previously, and might at the Superior's pleasure be deposed and sent to fieldwork at any moment; and the other functionaries are similarly liable to a trial of their disposition to obedience. They follow the ancient practice of electing their abbot from among their number, and once elected his power is absolute, within the rule, and subject to the control, of the highest authorities of the Order. He may read newspapers, and acquaint himself with worldly distractions, because being the governor, he must watch over the interests of the community, and in a Protestant country, as Brother Stephen said, more than ordinary vigilance is needful. "It may be that something comes before parliament which will affect us and necessitate measures of protection. The Reverend Father takes measures accordingly. He communicates to us the information which he thinks it desirable we should know: for instance, he told us of the war in Italy, and commanded us to pray for peace."

"But why take these precautions when your whole life is spent in achieving merit? Surely if you are so very meritorious in the sight of God, He will take care of you?"

"God may exercise His will by means of human instruments, all the same," was the answer: "and we are not to neglect human precautions, because we have His favour."

The guest-master holds a dispensation which allows him to talk, for otherwise the precept enjoining hospitality upon the brethren could not be obeyed. He also is not bound to retire to bed at eight, as do the others, but may remain up till nine, for the convenience of guests, and lie an hour later in the morning, rising at three instead of two. "It was not always an agreeable duty," he said, "to attend on guests, owing to the foolishness of some and the ignorance of others; but it was the duty appointed him by the Reverend Father, and therefore he did it cheerfully." No introduction is now required, as in former years, which may be taken as a sign either that the monastery feels itself stronger, or that visitors no longer misconduct themselves under its roof.

The Benedictines proper interpret the precept to labour by writing books and teaching schools; but the Cistercian branch of the order, to which these monks of St. Bernard belong, taking the words in their literal sense, understand labour as hard work, and betake themselves diligently to tillage, and other manual occupations. Hence their fields and gardens are among the most fruitful; their cattle, and swine, and poultry such as model-farmers esteem; their grain, fruit and butter the readiest of sale, as the brother who has a dispensation to go into the world, and transact business in the market-place knows full well. Among the brethren too, are some acquainted with building, carpentry and other mechanical trades; some prepare the gas with which the monastery is lighted, and some are

qualified to give lessons in music. When medical aid is required a practitioner is summoned from Sheepshed, a village two or three miles distant.

Cistercians, moreover, are bound to pray as well as to work, and fulfil the obligation by seven services every day. What will "miserable sinners," who find a morning-service once a week suffice for their spiritual wants say to this? They rise at two in the morning for matins—at one on Sundays—prime follows at five; tierce at a quarter past seven; sixte at eleven, then nones; vespers at five in the afternoon, and compline at seven in the evening, as already remarked. In order that the lay brethren, who are working in the fields and elsewhere should not be too much hindered by attendance on all these services, the Church in its wisdom, which savours in places of worldly wisdom, has prepared a short service, a few phrases, which, got by heart, may be recited by the brethren out of doors whenever the bell pealing from the church reminds them of the devotion there going on. Thus do they literally work and pray.

Not alone by prayer and labour do the Cistercians advance on their way to heaven: they keep silence, and speak not even to one another without their Superior's leave. That same famous writer before-mentioned, tells us that the little intellectual scavengers will clear away any quantity of mental rubbish, if a man will but hold his tongue, if he will but refrain for awhile from adding to the world's babble: we may, therefore, believe that clearness of intellect prevails among the monks. But though abounding in prayer, labour, and silence, they are spare in their diet: no meat, no fish, not an egg ever passes their lips, unless they be patients in the infirmary. With bread and

cheese, vegetables and milk, and occasionally fruit, they keep alive those poor bodies, which do but hinder the soul in its journey to heaven. They may drink a pint of beer a day, for the rules of the order allow the common beverage of the country when desirable—that is, for health's sake; and this beer they brew within their precinct.

Here I interposed with a remark, but Brother Stephen was not prepared to admit that a man in the world, doing truly that which is lawful and right, accomplishing the purpose of his existence with singleness of heart, and not over-anxious the while about going to heaven, had the same happy prospect as one who took laborious, not to say uncomfortable, pains to realise his hope. Nevertheless, there were some men whose chance of salvation was much better in the world than—as he phrased it—"in religion." Among them may be found many who mistake their vocation; who if they enter the monastery find its discipline too irksome for endurance and go back to their place in the multitude of the world. He, himself, had passed a probation of three years before taking the great vows, having tested his constancy and his desire for a religious life by a year of trial more than usual.

"And you don't repent it?" I asked.

"No," he answered with a fervour that marked his sincerity; "I look forward to a happy life within these walls, and to heaven at the last."

I could scarcely believe that we had talked for no more than an hour, when having lit a candle he led the way upstairs to a bedroom, which bears the name *St. Augustine*, on its lintel, warned me not to be alarmed if I should hear the bell ring before dawn, and with a cordial shake of the hand bade me good-night.

The room reminded me of chambers in which I had slept in Tyrol, with its white-washed walls, crucifix, holy-water stoup, and pictures representing the Adoration of the Magi, the Flight into Egypt, the Crucifixion, and St. Bernard and other Saints. Among them hung a map of Palestine, and an image in relief of the Last Supper; and to facilitate devotion there stood under the Crucifix a praying-desk. With the other furniture there was all that could be required for comfort and cleanliness.

My head was so full that I had to relieve it forthwith by entries in my note-book. I had written about twenty minutes when my eye was attracted by the placard of *Regulations for the Guests*, among which the 12th is—"To retire to rest at the same hour as the community, or if this is inconvenient, not to remain out of bed or have a light burning after 9 o'clock, and never to read in bed by night." Having read this, I trespassed no longer, but put out the light, and went to bed.

How profound was the stillness! favourable to meditation. Even the breeze seemed to have gone to sleep, for not a sound came through the open window. I lay thinking over what I had seen and heard; but whether by result of early training, or something better or worse than prejudice, or through a want of charity on my part, there was a sextain of the Dean of St. Patrick's that would come into my mind:—

"Who can believe with common-sense,
A bacon-slice gives God offence;
Or, how a herring hath a charm
Almighty vengeance to disarm?
Wrapt up in Majesty divine,
Doth He regard on what we dine!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

Early Rising—The Regulations—The Calvary—The Territory—History—Old Cottage, New Monastery—The Abbot's Visit—Effect of Monastic Life on Health—Beer instead of Water—Are Convents desirable?—A Church without Gaudiness—Mass—Breakfast—How to prevent Talking—Incitements to Goodness—The Infirmary—The Dormitory—The Chapter-House—Lay-Brothers at Work—The Refectory—Lenten Dinner—Brewhouse, Bakehouse, and Dairy—A Remedy for Meagreness—The Library and Librarian—Taking Notes from a Jesuit—A Conversation—A Miracle—The Colony, a Reformatory—The Abbot in the Field—Three hundred Culprits—Trades to Learn—Plenty of Work—The Kitchen—The School-Room—Books and Music—The Chapel—Father Ignatius—How to maintain Discipline—Good Horticulture—The Burial Ground—A Skilful Cook—Uncommon Drink—Departure—Moral Phenomena.

"EARLY to bed, early to rise," says the proverb: I heard the bell ring for matins, and was on my feet before it sounded for prime, reading the *Regulations* without any further fear of trespass. As exemplary of the spirit of the house, I here note a few particulars, which "The guests whom Divine Providence may conduct to St. Bernard's Abbey are respectfully requested to attend to."

"On the day of arrival to inform the Guestmaster of the length of Visit and whether on retreat or as Guests."

"Not to go beyond the limits, or to the Abbey Grange, without express permission from the Rev. Father Abbot."

"To observe strict silence in the cloisters."

"To study silence generally, and to observe it strictly from Complin until after Prime of the next day, and during that time not to speak even to the brother in attendance without the most urgent necessity."

"To assist at High Mass and Complin every day, and also at Vespers on Sundays and Holidays: the tribune of the church is appropriated to the use of guests exclusively."

In addition to which visitors are requested not to go into each other's rooms, to send away no letter or parcel but through the guest-master, to be punctual at meals, not to lounge about the porch or passages, and are warned against smoking within the walls.

At six o'clock I went out and mounted to the top of the Calvary for the view; hoping to refresh my memory with a sight of the landscapes overlooked by Bardon; but a raw driving mist hid the distant prospect. So I scrambled about the huge masses of stone, contenting myself with the visible. The elevation commands the abbey and its territory; and gazing over those well-tilled fields, and well-kept gardens, those belts of trees and sheltering plantations, we must remember that not many years ago the territory was for the most part a waste. Its history briefly told is this:—

In the autumn of 1831, about a year after the accession of the Citizen King, the brotherhood of the Abbey of Melleraye in Brittany, were expelled their house, by order from the minister at Paris, and seventy of the number, English and Irish, were imprisoned for some weeks at Nantes. At the end of this time they were put on board an old condemned vessel of war, and carried to Cork, where, having established themselves

according to their means, they built the Abbey of Mount Melleraye. After awhile a few of the number travelled to England, and wandered about enduring privations, and coming at length to Charnwood, took up their abode in a dilapidated cottage which then stood on the land now occupied as the Abbey Grange. There they lived for a year as best they could on charity. Assistance came from Gracedieu Manor, an ancient Roman Catholic heritage, not far off, and from other benefactors, and the brethren were enabled to build a small monastery and chapel, and enter into possession of about forty acres of land. This was in 1835: four years later the then Earl of Shrewsbury proposed the building of a larger establishment on the opposite side of the valley, and contributed largely towards the undertaking. How it was realised from plans prepared by Pugin, is now seen in the present edifice which, standing on the slope beneath the crag, forms a picturesque object in the landscape. The style is Early English, and there is a quietness of aspect about the whole which befits a community who regard wealth as a snare, and pride as a pitfall. But it is intended when means are adequate, to enlarge the church, and adorn it with a spire, and future generations may perhaps hear a peal of bells ringing out on joyful anniversaries. Meanwhile the visitor looking down from the crag sees a monastery similar in appearance to some of the minor religious houses that once stood in many a pleasant English vale, and now remain stricken and beautified by Time, picturesque memorials of a faith which having forgotten the exercise of fair-play, had to give place to a higher principle.

Paths lead from the Calvary winding among the

trees, and bordered by flowers, down to the gravelled drive, and shrubberies that decorate the approach to the abbey. The summit is judiciously left in its natural state. In the early days of the monastery certain folk of Loughborough, denying the right of the monks to the crag, came hither at times with a band of music, and annoyed the quiet house by their noisy demonstrations. But the brethren have lived down clamorous opposition, and can now perform their devotions and cultivate their three hundred acres in peace.

I had sauntered about the mount for nearly an hour when the guest-master came with an intimation that the Reverend Father was about to favour me with a visit. I returned to the guests' room, and presently the Superior entered, preceded by the guest-master, who made a bow and retired. Holding out his hand the reverend gentleman bade me welcome, looking at me the while with a cheerful eye, and a happy expression of countenance that could hardly fail to win confidence. He wore the ample flowing white hooded gown put on in readiness to take his place in the choir at tierce, which was soon to commence, and looked a true abbot as he sat wrapped in the full folds of his garment. In manner he was as friendly and affable as the guest-master, making no manifestation of authority. After running over the points of the previous evening's conversation we came to the sanitary question—the effect of conventual discipline on health? Instances, he said, did occur in which the spare diet and self-denying practices led to ill-health and weakness; and individuals had to give up the cloister in consequence; they were however rare. He, for his part, had suffered from a malady which, as he showed me, had left scars, and was clearly traceable to low living; but since then

his health had been good, as was that of the community generally. The improvement was perhaps due to a change in the dietary ordered by their chief, the Abbot of Melleraye, during his visitation a few years ago—the drinking of beer instead of water at dinner. The rules of the order sanction the use of the ordinary beverage of the country in case of need; and it was a wise measure to prescribe good beer for impoverished vigour.

The guest-master came in, saluted reverentially, and announced the time of service. "Let them begin without me," answered the abbot, and with another salute Brother Stephen withdrew. By this I was favoured with another half-hour of conversation, chiefly on the question whether monastic establishments are beneficial to a country? The Reverend Father took the affirmative, as became a good son of the Church: convents were centres of charity, industry, and pious example which could not but tend to the material and spiritual welfare of a neighbourhood; and it would be a happy thing for England if convents were now as numerous as they were in the sixteenth century.

"Was that a conclusion," I asked, "which could be safely inferred from what we know concerning the monastic life of that same century, and preceding ages?"

"Well—it is not to be denied that great scandals prevailed which may have provoked the Great Break-up; but the condition of the people at that time was more favourable to the assumption of power and privilege by the Church than it is now by the spread of education. Now the people would only see in monasteries a daily fulfilment of God's service, and an example of industry and self-denial."

I was mentally admiring the figure of speech used to express what most of us are agreed to call the Reformation, when the Reverend Father rose and expressed his hope that I would stay some days, which would give me further knowledge of the place, and opportunity for conversation with others of the brotherhood. Willingly would I have accepted had the term of my holiday been moveable at my pleasure: I could only speak my thanks, and promise to make the most of the remaining hours. Though his duties left him no leisure the abbot thought we might meet again in the course of the morning; then as we shook hands, I reminded him of the probability of my notes appearing in print, as already intimated: "We can have no objection," he answered, "that the truth concerning us should be known;" and with a friendly greeting he went away to his place in the choir.

I followed after a short interval, took a place in the gallery, and sat there during the mass which follows the office of tierce. For general plainness of appearance, the church would put to shame some so-called Protestant churches in which the congregation rise up and do homage to gaudiness and priestcraft: the walls are white-washed, and the beams of the roof of which the pendent posts spring from corbels appear the darker by contrast with the broad white surface. The east end is pierced by two lancet lights and a rose filled with stained glass: at the west end behind the gallery, is the space allotted to worshippers not of the community, and strangers. If fifty years hence the same plainness should prevail there will be at least one proof that wisdom cometh by silence.

I was quite ready for breakfast by the time mass was over, and sat down with one of the strangers

whom I had seen in the gallery the evening before, and who judging from his ecclesiastical dress was a scion of the Church. No sooner was coffee poured out, than the guest-master, sitting in a corner began to read aloud with deliberate utterance from a good book, which sounded very much like Thomas à Kempis. This practice of reading favours the general discipline of the house; preventing the guests from talking while it edifies. When the other, who ate quickly, saw that I had finished, he spoke a signal to the reader, stood up, made the sign of the cross, recited a grace, and immediately betook himself once more to his retreat.

Then Brother Stephen showing himself a good economist of time conducted me over the abbey. If the Christian virtues do not flourish within the walls it is not for want of incitement thereto by the numerous Scripture texts and moral precepts that meet the eye: "The life of man upon earth is a warfare"—"With honour preventing one another"—"Let us love one another for charity is of God." Over a door is written "Whom the Lord loveth He chastiseth."—This door opens into the Infirmary, a room furnished with the simple appliances needful for the comfort of temperate patients, all cleaft and well-ordered; and no perceptible want of ventilation. The attendant, who was preparing a broth, bent his head as I entered but spoke not a word. He had the sadly-resigned look which struck me as characteristic of most of the lay-brethren. Then we mounted to the dormitory, a long room occupied by a double row of bedsteads, or rather cribs, in which the brethren sleep. They are all alike, each furnished with a straw bed and pillow, and a coverlet figured with a cross and the monogram I H S. The abbot sleeps here with his monks, and his bed in no

wise differs from the rest except in bearing a label inscribed *Reverend Father*. Here he assumes no privilege over the others, but makes his own bed, and shares with them the general duties of the dormitory; and with them may ponder the inscriptions on the wall: "In my bed by night I sought Him whom my soul loveth"—"In peace in the selfsame I will sleep and I will rest."

In the room which hitherto has been used as chapter-house the phrases are: "A just man shall fall seven times and shall rise again," and "The just man is first accuser of himself"—both applicable to the proceedings which take place therein. This room will in future serve for other purposes, as a proper chapter-house had just been built, and was soon to be finished within as well as without.

Here as elsewhere I saw lay-brothers and novices engaged in cleaning—scrubbing, sweeping, dusting, and it looked strange to see men occupied in what is commonly regarded as women's work: strange also was the silence of the workers. Not one however failed in the courteous bow, which doubtless involves none of the danger of a spoken salutation. All the washing too is done by the hands of men, including the vestments for use in the church which require delicate manipulation, but as the community wear flannel drawers and shirts, and no linen or cotton, there is but little 'getting up' of fine linen. Summer or winter the dress is woollen: hence in the one season the monks can pass from their labours in the sunshine to the coolness of the cloister without risk, and in the other keep themselves warm without haunting the fire.

In the refectory a portion of the dinner was already

laid, a knife and spoon, a mug of water, a piece of bread and a small quantity of stewed rhubarb at each place, and each identified by a small wooden label marked with a brother's name. Judging of what was yet to be served by what was set out, it must have been but a Lenten repast, especially after an almost nominal breakfast: however, the reading-desk stands at one end, and by what is read from thence while they are eating the community may find a rich feast for mind and heart.

I saw the brewhouse, bakehouse, and dairy, all scrupulously clean. In the latter, two brothers were packing butter for market. One of them had so waxy a complexion and so very subdued a look, that I could not help expressing a wish to put him on a course of beefsteaks, and my belief that such a regimen would soon give him a healthier and happier appearance. Brother Stephen was perhaps tickled by the notion, for he laughed merrily; but could not accept my opinion as the true one in that case, wherein he differs from our Shropshire friend who testified to the virtue of butcher's chips.

Then to the Library, where I had the pleasure of an introduction to Father Robert the Librarian, who had on a black skull-cap, and his scapula confined by a leathern girdle over the gray frock. I put some of the same questions to him that I had put to the guest-master, and in reply he reached a book from the shelf, *The Happiness of a Religious Life*, by Hierome Platus, and referred me to certain passages for answer.

Let us pause here and take note of the zealous Jesuit's exposition and arguments. He tells us that "Among all those things which have been by God most advisedly and most lovingly invented and

accomplished for the help and salvation of mankind, this manner of living under rule and order is to be accounted the chiefest." In combats it is shameful to run away; but "in the conflict which we have with vice, it is quite contrarie. For to fly, is to overcome." A monastic life cannot be too much praised because the devil cannot overcome the monk: "He cannot hooke him in with desire of gold and silver; nor catch him by unlawful bargains, nor put upon him anie other kind of unjust dealing, because he hath forsaken all his owne, that he might not covet that which belongeth to another." There is a merit in poverty, for "it is a greate meanes to blot out the sinnes of our former life." Even if a man live a perfect life in the world, "yet a religious life doth infinitely overtop it;" one of the first fruits thereof being "perfect remission of all sins committed," though there be other means of gaining remission, "and chiefly by Indulgences granted by His Holiness, to whome God hath given power to that effect." And though there be Religious men who live deboshed lives, "yet the church is still holie, and besides the holiness of their Institute we may cleere them upon another ground, for whatsoever blemish may fall upon them by the faults of some, it is abundantly striken out by the virtuous lives and good deeds of others."

Replying on the question as to how the world should go on if all men became monks and chaste, he says, the question is old, and quotes in answer, St. Augustine's rejoinder, "Would to God all would do so; the cittie of God would be much sooner filled, and the end of the world hastened on." He shows that an assemblage of men is beautiful as jewels fairly set, or a concert of music, and cites from St. Gregory Nazian-

zen, "they long not after that Rib which foolishly loveth the body, they repose not their hopes upon a new rank of children." Though it be true that "the duties of marriage may be performed without offence to God, yet to cut off all pleasure in this kind also is not only more beneficial, but an easier and more readie way to save our souls." Only among men can there be profitable conversation; "for where women are, there is no living."

Who, after reading this would expect to find the misogynist Father rejoicing "that our blessed Ladie hath taken the religious into her particular charge and care?"

Among the persecutors whom he denounces is "Henry the Eighth," who "falling from the Church made a league with hell." But more pernicious than royal and imperial persecutors was Wycliffe "the Heretick," inasmuch as he declareth monkish practices to be "humane inventions, idle conceits and newly devised, and averreth that there is no more perfection in them, than the ordinarie manner of living of all Christians doth contayne."

Here we will take leave of Jerome Plat, and put back his voluminous book upon the shelf.

Seeing the Lives of some of the celebrated miracle-working saints of the Romish calendar, I asked Father Robert if he believed them. Why should he not believe them? It was impossible to deny that miracles had been worked or that they were not worked even now: perfect faith was alone required. In proof he referred me to the case of a woman long crippled and bed-ridden by a spinal complaint, who not long ago was inspired to journey from Wolverhampton to St. Winifred's Well and who by bathing therein was

completely cured. Admitting the facts, I ventured to suggest that the nervous system acted on by a highly-excited fixed idea, might co-operate with the shock of the water in bringing about a cure; and how that Sir Humphry Davy had once cured a rheumatic patient at Bristol by simply placing the bulb of a small thermometer under his tongue at daily intervals for a week.

"True," replied Father Robert, "but nervous stimulus will not fill up the gap produced by actual decay of the bone in this instance. Besides, if we are to explain away miracles on that ground, where shall we stop?"

The answer was obvious, but I thought best to keep it silent until some qualified practitioner at Wolverhampton shall have sent a full description and particulars of this spinal cure to the Medico-Chirurgical or the Pathological Society.

From a glance along the shelves, the Library appeared to me to contain variety enough of books to instruct as well as to edify the community. Among them I noticed the works of St. Augustine, the *Pictorial Bible*, *Locke* and *Josephus*; and a sprinkling of science and philosophy among ecclesiastical history, biographies of the canonized, and divines and theologians not a few.

Then we went forth to see 'the Colony,' as it is called; but which is really a Reformatory for young Roman Catholic culprits. Originated a few years since by certain gentlemen of Liverpool, it receives no small portion of its probationers from Lancashire, and is governed, trained, and edified by the monks of St. Bernard's. On our way thither I saw the Reverend Father striding across a field to give directions concerning a drain to one of the lay-brethren; no longer

in ample flowing gown, but bareheaded, and with his frock looped up nearly to his knees, by the strings attached for the purpose, after the manner of a working-monk. I met him two or three times afterwards about the Colony, pacing as one diligent in his duty, and always with the same cheerful expression of countenance.

The factory-like edifice with adjacent workshops, and other buildings, yards, gardens and fields constitute the Reformatory, presenting a scene of order and industry alike satisfactory and praiseworthy. The boys about three hundred in number, from ten to sixteen years of age, besides secular and religious instruction, are allowed to choose any one of a variety of trades; and you may see cloggers, smiths, tin-workers, painters, bookbinders, shoemakers, tailors, stocking-weavers, carpenters and joiners, and other useful employments. A range of capability is observable; some prefer farm-work, and some have no faculty beyond mere labour, and are stonebreakers and mortarbearers. It reminded me of scenes in ancient pictures, to see a blackfrocked laybrother on a high scaffold superintending the roofing of one of the buildings. Go where you will you see a laybrother or a secular in charge; which may be taken as a sign that the training of the boys is carried on as real, earnest work; and if one may judge from a casual visit, the boys appreciate the endeavours maintained for their welfare. I saw none but contented or animated faces; and though some looked roguishly one at another, there was a general brightening up at the approach of Brother Stephen, and the worthy monk had ever a kind and gentle word to speak to the busy groups. Even the stonebreakers plied their hammers

as if engaged on piecework at ten shillings the ton; and as for the smiths they clearly enjoyed smiting and shaping the stubborn metal to the music of the anvil. It would not be wise to forbid talking; but control of the unruly member is enjoined by example as well as precept. "He who keepeth his mouth and tongue, keepeth his soul from trouble," is written on the wall of the joiners' shop; and at one end, visible from every bench appear the solemn words *O, Eternity, Eternity—All for Jesus.*

The washhouse is well arranged, having plenty of space, and pipes for the conveyance of water led to a series of tubs and troughs, in which a number of boys with bare legs were treading the soaked clothing. Whenever they look at the door, they may read the invocation written thereon, *S. Stephen pray for us.*

The gardens adjoin the inclosure, and there I saw boys digging, hoeing and weeding amid plentiful crops of cabbage and beans, and within sight of the cemetery set apart for the probationers. In the kitchen another party were shelling beans and helping the cook, free to enjoy the savoury smell of soup issuing from the coppers. Near the kitchen is the bakehouse, and above that a small steam-mill for the grinding of wheat.

The principal building is larger than appears from the front, having inner courts inclosed by the various offices, workshops and apartments required for the lodging and training of the inmates. The bedrooms are clean and well ventilated; each boy has a separate bed, and in each bedroom sleeps the lay-brother in charge, on a bed as little luxurious as all the rest. There is a good schoolroom, and a recreation-room, where you may see a music-stand and hear at times the sound of drum, fife, and trumpet, for martial music is

not forbidden to any youthful learner who prefers it to soft and sentimental airs. There seemed something incongruous I thought, in the sight of a meek-looking blackfrocked lay-brother acting as leader to such inspiriting strains; but there is wisdom in encouraging the boys to cultivate any taste or faculty which may subjugate the habit of idleness, and inclination for pilfering.

Yellow panes shining at the side of one of the courts indicate the chapel, a showy place compared with the abbey church. The altar was fitted up by one of the brethren who happened to be acquainted with the art of decoration, and he has certainly made it attractive to the eye. Just within the entrance hang two coloured prints, impressive to the youthful imagination, one representing the deathbed of the good accompanied by the blessing of the Church, and hovering angels, while in the other the wicked is shown lost to the Church, and a prey to spirit-forms which are not angelic; from which I inferred that wisdom does not prevail to the same extent in the chapel as in the music-room.

As a finish to my survey Brother Stephen introduced me to Father Ignatius director of the Reformatory, whose appearance corresponded with what I had remarked of the other choir-brethren, having a more comfortable and less hungry expression than is shown by the lay-brothers. In removing from the abbey he had not left behind the courtesy and kindness there shown to strangers, and we had some talk on the condition and discipline of the Colony. That both were good he thought demonstrated by the appearance of the boys, and their conduct: the one I had seen, the other he could answer for. It was shown on the one hand by the very small number of attempts at flight,

although running away would be easy; on the other by the confidence reposed in him by the boys, most of whom, should they commit a fault, immediately repair to him and confess it. Confession leads in many instances to remission of punishment; and I asked whether there might not be reason to doubt the sincerity of an avowal that procured such easy consequences? "I am up to that dodge," answered Father Ignatius, with a chuckle, "and when I believe that the confession is prompted only by fear of penalty, the offender does not escape punishment."

We returned to the abbey through the gardens, where thriving cultivation was everywhere manifest in the quality and abundance of herbs, vegetables and fruits, showing what valuable results are possible on a cold upland by skill and attention. At the upper end a large square plot is set apart as a burial-ground, sanitary considerations having led to the discontinuance of interments in the grassy quadrangle adjoining the cloister. The general view of the garden is enlivened by the appearance of the gray stone wall which with its numerous buttresses has somewhat of a picturesque effect.

Presently my dinner was ready—stewed cabbage, potatoes, and an omelette: a better omelette was never cooked, and complimenting Brother Stephen on the skill of the coquinarius, I invited him to partake; but he laughed at the temptation, as became a good Cistercian. He was not in the room when I took—or rather attempted to take—my first draught of beer, or I might have asked whether in that particular there was not a breach of the rules, for judging from the sample set before me, it is not the "common" but the uncommon drink of the country, so bad did I find it.

Towards the close of the repast, attentive to his hospitable duties, he came in again and began to converse. I took the opportunity to remind him that in all our talk there had been no mention of Scripture. I had purposely avoided reference thereto; he, as he said not purposely, but seeing no occasion. "Do not think," he continued, "that we make no use of Scripture here, for every choir-brother has a Bible and is required to devote a portion of one of the daily services to its study."

Then it was time to depart. I signed my name in the book, gave Brother Stephen a hearty hand-grip as we said farewell, while he repeated his regret that I could not stay longer; and some ten minutes later, recrossing the brow on the way to Coalville, I lost sight of St. Bernard's Abbey.

Half a mile farther I met two of the boys driving a cart, at liberty to run away if they chose, for no one watched them: a corroborative instance, it may be, that Father Ignatius' belief in the sense of honour awakened in his flock is not mistaken.

From a friend of mine who since then has visited the abbey, I hear that Brother Stephen spoke of me as the most inquisitive guest he had ever entertained. I trust that the worthy guest-master in consideration of my motive, has granted me indulgence ere this, and has not forgotten his promise to remember me in his supplications. If ever the opportunity offers I will go again to the Abbey and stay a week. Meanwhile I must conclude, with the famous author quoted in the foregoing chapter, that a monk of the old sort is no longer possible, neither does it seem to me desirable that he should be. While the romantic quality of mind is a human characteristic, there will be

no end to its eccentric manifestations. A friend of mine, overmuch in love with the Past, would willingly forego tea and coffee, potatoes and wheaten bread, highways and railways, to have his life in the "spacious" days of Queen Elizabeth. And perhaps there will always be men and women of that morbid and superstitious imagination which invests life in a convent with an attractive charm; and they may be permitted to gratify their whim or their conviction, and to build two or three picturesque edifices wherein to seek seclusion without harm to any one but themselves. And perhaps there will always be men and women who look on growth, even in grace, as an exogenous process; who prefer mechanical to moral self-control, and mistake outward observances for inward development. Let them be happy and cherish their religion, if they can. But that a convent in every pleasant vale throughout the realm for the propagation of such opinions, pervaded by monastic discipline, tenanted by cowls and hoods, to whom the significance of "Be fruitful and multiply" is but the evasive meritoriousness of celibacy—that this would tend to the real welfare of the community at large, is a proposition to which but very few thoughtful minds will accede.

CHAPTER XXX.

Coalville to Tutbury—A Romantic River Utilized—The Church—The Castle—The Valley of Dove—Uttoxeter—Samuel Johnson's Penance—A Fidgetty Railway—The Staffordshire Knot—"Why didn't ye holler?"—The Trolly—Darnt for Derwent—The Churnet Valley—Oakamoor—Pretty Scenery—Leek—Hill-Country—A Companion—Axe-Edge—Dreary Landscape—Nine Months' Winter, and Three Months' bad Weather—Mug for Mist—Warslow—A Mountain Village—A Hill-Prospect—Ecton Mine—Leaden Opulence—The Manifold—The Dove—Hartington—The Little Fishing-House—Charles Cotton and Izaak Walton—Lofty Cliffs and Running Water—Inspirations—Pike Pool—Stepping Stones—Stony Scenery—Narrowdale—Sunshiny Repast—Quiet Thoughts—Viator and Piscator—Changes of Landscape—Concentrated Loveliness—Thorpe Cloud and Bunster—Ilam—The Hilltop—Walk to Ashbourn—Congreve and Moore.

From Coalville back to Burton, thence five miles northwesterly, and we come to Tutbury, a pleasant little town on the Dove—a place which, as I know by experience, will bear visiting two or three times. The river flows here with a sober current, as if in no haste to lose itself in the Trent; and a sentimental traveller might lament that a stream, fraught with many classic associations, with happy memories of romantic scenes, after caressing banks where Naiads might haunt—and better still, Nature-loving mortals delight to wander—should be compelled to drive the machinery of a big red spinning-mill.

Church and castle stand well up behind the town, as we approach from the station, forming a scene which

promises well for a nearer view; nor are we disappointed, when having ascended the rustic street, we come to the churchyard, and sit down on the sloping bank before the western entrance of the church. That doorway, with its circular sweep of mouldings all curiously carved, is an admirable specimen of the so-called Saxon style. Long will your eye linger on the zig-zags, the dog-tooth, the strange figures of birds and animals, the deep shadows, and bold relief, the capitals, no two alike, before wandering away to the round-headed doors on each side, or to the square buttressed tower, on which Time has left the mark of his wasting finger. The edifice shows signs of better days; it had a chapel of St. Stephen, but we are told that Sir William Cavendish pulled it down, as well as part of the church, to build himself a house with the stone.

Having sauntered for a while from end to end of the venerable edifice, and noted its touches of antiquity, we pursue our way up the hill, to the ruin which crowns the summit. Once within the old gray wall that springs from the verge of the abrupt slope, we see the usual traces of a castle: a large open grassy court; at one end, on the topmost height, the shattered remains of a circular keep; at the other, fragments of towers backed by a green terrace; near the centre a deep well covered by a conical-roofed shed; relics of a later residence, and a dwelling which looks like a farmhouse, where you may get the key if you wish to explore the towers. The view is wide and pleasing; the Dove curves past the base of the hill; the ancient approach is seen in the straight hollow way that runs down through the bushes and trees by which greater part of the slope is overgrown; the town nestles beneath; and afar, your eye ranges down the vale of Trent, even to

Nottingham in one direction, in the other to the hill-country of Derbyshire; and with all this before your eye, and glimpses of history in which appear the kings of Mercia, the Earls of Lancaster, and the unhappy queen of Scots, for the mind, Tutbury castle is a place where you may lounge away a few hours of a sunshiny afternoon very agreeably. There is besides a touch of tradition; for here the merry Outlaw wedded the huntress whom he accosted in Sherwood forest—

> "Says Robin Hood, 'fair lady, whither away?
> O whither, fair lady away?'
> And she made him answer, 'to kill a fat buck,
> For to-morrow is Titbury day.'"

Desirous of a trip into North Staffordshire by what was to me a new route, I journeyed onwards up the valley of the Dove. The train stops at Uttoxeter,—Utcheter, as the rustics call it—and who that sees the church-spire rising above the houses, will fail to think of Samuel Johnson, and his self-imposed penance in the market-place of the town: a penance which to us who come after is a lesson from the precept, "Honour thy father and thy mother."

A fidgetty line is this North Staffordshire railway. I have heard it described as all legs and wings: beginning nowhere and ending nowhere; and you may think yourself lucky if you have not to change trains at two or three junctions. In fact, whenever you come within the region where the Staffordshire knot, symbolic of detention, is painted on the sides of trucks and vans, there make up your mind that the trains start "sometimes one time sometimes another."

"Law, Sir! why didn't ye holler? This train ain't so very pertikler," said a station-master as I once

ran panting into a little station just in time to hear the engine give its starting snort.

Stoppages are however favourable to observation, especially on Saturday, when the throng of rustic passengers is great. If the name of the river should happen to be mentioned, you will hear Dove pronounced with the *o* as in *rove*.

"People dune loike to set comf'table," expostulates a miner with the guard, who insists that eight passengers shall squeeze into the places of five.

Three or four navvies come hurriedly up on a trolly, a low truck which they impel by a succession of kicks against the ground to save walking, and one of them tells of an acquaintance who "fell into the Darnt and welly drooned;" Darnt being the vernacular for Derwent. "Whur be ye a goin' tew?" asks another. "Tew here;" is the answer.

Another, whose pronoun is 'yow,' sets up a dispute with a porter: "Oi mun ha' my tikkut. Oi ha' peed my fear."

"Oi mun get out," says another, and departs with a "Good noight, nayber."

We leave the Dove, and speed into the valley of the Churnet—river and valley both alike pretty; catching a glimpse of Alton Towers, standing proudly up on the left. Anon the vale narrows: then Oakamoor, a rustic station, suggests something sylvan, and truly has much to show of felled timber and thriving woods. How the railway curves hither and thither, having as you might think, scant room in places to pass between the canal and the dark red crags that peep out from the foliage. Then the heights recede, leaving small meadows and pastures, and space for lonely houses and gardens, so secluded that you feel almost sorry the locomotive

should have come to disturb their quiet. Merrily flows the stream, now on one side of the line, now on the other; and we rattle onwards, shut in by a succession of romantic scenes, interrupted here and there by results of mining industry, where bye-roads descend from the heights, until the romantic scenes are left behind, and we stop at Leek station, in a widening of the vale. The journey accomplished, I felt the more disappointed at not having had time to walk the distance at least from Uttoxeter; for the Churnet valley is a place to linger in. I look forward to it as a walk yet to be enjoyed.

Meanwhile there was a delightful walk in prospect, and two hours of daylight still available for approach to the ground. So I walked up the long hill into the town, uphill through the town, uphill beyond the town, and there stood a few minutes to look round and recover breath. What a hilly landscape! green enough on the lower slopes and in the hollows; but the uplands bleak and bare, and sombre-looking under the gloomy evening sky. Leek, rearing many a tall chimney aloft, betokens its manufacture of cotton goods, and contrasts bright modern features with traces of former days—the first stone cross, a vestige of the earliest Christian worship; the Cistercian abbey of Dieulacres, founded by Randolph, Earl of Chester, at the bidding of his grandfather's ghost; and with the time when Dr. Plot came hither, and beholding Hen Cloud and Leek Rocks, said, "my admiration was still heightened to see such vast rocks, and such really stupendous prospects, which I had never seen before, or could have believed to be anywhere but in picture."

Still uphill, along the broad highway leading to

Buxton, across a region which, though severe of aspect, still possesses the attractions enumerated by Drayton:

"Yet many rivers clear
There glide in silver swathes,
And what of all most dear,
Buxton's delicious baths,
Strong ale and noble cheer
T' assuage breem Winter's scathes."

But the Derbyshire spa not being my destination on this occasion, I turned at the tollbar into a road on the right—the nearest way to Hartington in Dovedale, and soon made closer acquaintance with the North Staffordshire hill-country.

A rustic lassie who loitered on the ascent, looking back from time to time, inquired, as I came up, if I were going to Warslow, and seemed not a little pleased at getting a reply in the affirmative; for she had walked from home to Leek in the morning, had taken a railway-journey, and now wished to get home, as the morrow would be Sunday. With company she hoped to be able, though very tired, to walk the distance. So we paced together up the long steep ascent, perhaps a mile, to the little stony village of Thorncliff, where a wayside fountain reminds one of Alpine scenes. Beyond the village there was another mile of steeper slope before we came to the brow. I had offered to carry the lassie's basket when we set out on the toilsome climb, and relieved of her burden, she began to talk and become confidential after the manner of country-folk, and told me a family history, and how that she had been to seek a 'place' at Macclesfield, and now hoped to surprise her mother by an unexpected return home.

There is a wild grandeur in the view that opens on you from the summit: vast ridgy moorlands rolling away on every side—here black, there russet—and the dark shades blending with acres of verdure beneath where sheep feed and cattle graze, and little farmsteads stand lonely in the wide solitude. But the stern features predominate, and you survey a wild and dreary landscape which, as the maiden said, "is enough to make anybody cry that walks over it all alone of an evening." Among the summits heaving their varied outlines up into the distant view you see Axe-edge, a savage hill which gives birth to the Dove, and commands so broad a sketch of country that the keen gazers of the Ordnance survey saw from thence the signals exhibited on Snowdon and on Lincoln cathedral at the same time, though the intervening distance is more than one hundred and fifty miles.

More and more dreary becomes the elevated region traversed by the road. A hill-farmer, who gave us a few minutes of his company, said it was a wild country all ways, "for they had nine months' winter and three months' bad weather." The evening was chilly and dismal; cold damp mists blew across, but inspired perhaps by local patriotism he assured me it was not so bad as it seemed; that "'twas nothin' but mug agate," and wouldn't rain. "'Twill be all roight," he affirmed, as bidding us "good noight," he turned down a lane to his house.

By and by the road began to descend; the bare stone fences gave place to hedgerows, and at length the whitewashed cottages of Warslow showed dimly through the dusk. The now limping lassie took her basket and went off happy in the thought of surprising her mother, and I went on to the *Greyhound*, a rustic inn, which

offers cleanliness and good entertainment, and where I found it very comfortable to sit by the bright kitchen fire while waiting for tea. Listening to the villagers' dialect, with your eyes shut, you might almost fancy yourself translated back into the days when Mercia was a kingdom. Some clip their words curiously; and one makes himself remarkable by a corroborative, "Aw 've heerd so," spoken with a knowing nod of the head at each scrap of local gossip.

"Ha' ye got moy keys," cries the host to his wife, who could not get tea ready without borrowing the bunch.

Seen by daylight, Warslow presents much of the aspect of a mountain village, stony and somewhat rough, yet relieved by trees and gardens. Happier than some, the inhabitants can choose where they will worship, for they have a chapel as well as a low, square-towered church. Eastwards, among the hills, lies a mining region, and the view of these hills as you walk down the gentle descent from the village is animating.

The more animating as I set forth, for the day opened with the sunshine, and fresh breezy coolness, that make the heart leap with gladness as you spring from bed to salute the morn. The nearer hills rise in huge green masses, patched here and there with gray where the rock peeps through, while farther, conical peaks show black and sharp against the clear blue sky. A cheerful pastoral landscape occupies the foreground, refreshing to the eye by its greenness, where cattle are numerous and grain scanty: no wheat, nothing but a few thin patches of oats. Yet so cheerful is the scene, that you will be inspired to join the lark in his morning-song.

A little farther, and there are the remains of water-

courses, and other mining appliances; and in the hill on the right is that wonderful Ecton mine, where the lead lay in so pure a state, and in masses so prodigious, that the like was never known in England. "Aw 've heerd," said a countryman who had overtaken me, "as the Dook o' Devonshire got a thousand pound a week out o' that mine for seven year runnin', what wi' lead, and what wi' copper." I had heard on good authority that the cavity of the mine was big enough to contain St. Paul's; and asked the rustic if it were true that a church could be put into it? "A church!" he replied in a tone that savoured of pity at the stranger's ignorance, "ye moight put a doozen in, and foind room for more." But the riches are exhausted, and the mine is now full of water; yet in the hope that more rich veins may be met with, a shaft is sinking on the slope of the opposite hill.

We come to the pretty valley and stream of the Manifold; a sparkling little river, of lively current, and "trouty" withal, as old Izaak's poetical friend would have described it. The sight of crystal water flowing over a stony bed tempts us to linger for a few minutes on the bridge, and watch the gleaming ripples and swarming fish. Do the lively creatures ever exchange sunlight for darkness where the Manifold, on its way to the Dove, plunges into a cavity and flows some miles underground? There, in the gloomy caverns it is accompanied by the Hamps, a little river which, after running along the base of the Weever hills, disappears at a place called Waterfall. Thereabouts is the village, so much screened from the sun by the great ridge, that the old distich describes it as

"Wootton under Weever
Where God came never."

The streams reappear at one of the pretty places where we may hope to halt before sunset.

Farther, and we come to a little mill and a bridge over a gentle stream flowing between grassy banks. That stream is the Dove; and if you have imagined it a bright, blithesome babbler throughout its course, you will be disappointed here, for it winds tamely enough through the meadows. Has it seen nothing all the way from Axe-edge worth babbling about? Be not impatient. Follow the course downward for a mile with your eye to the wood beyond the meadows: there is the Beresford estate, whose heiress was married to Charles Cotton's father; there a change of scene awaits us. Meanwhile we may content ourselves with the view of a pleasing landscape; the meadows spread away till they meet the hills that form the eastern border of the vale; and as Hartington looks inviting among ash trees and sycamores about half a mile distant, we will walk thither before commencing our ramble along the bank of the river.

To one who would enjoy a quiet holiday in very comfortable quarters the *Sleigh Arms* will satisfy in one particular; the country around, in the other. Hartington is a pleasant village, of stone, thatch, creepers, and rough-cast, intermixed, and with a good old church at one end on a rising ground, where modern handiwork—a tesselated floor and open pews—does not spoil the effect of the ancient features. The walk from the bridge is repaid if only by the sight of curious gargoyles and fragments of a carved cross that lie on each side of the tower-door, and the old font and noble chancel-arch within. Harebells grow among the graves; and the rural muse has not been unmindful of the departed. Here is a specimen:

The Man that lies beneath this Stone
Was for his honesty well known
An Industrious Wife he had and children kind
Which gave satisfaction to his mind
His debts he paid his grave you see
Prepare yourself to follow he.

Having bought a ration of bread and cheese, I took the devious green path across the meadows, traversed the foot-bridge, doubled the curves, and came presently to the "little fishing-house" dear to anglers far and near, which has stood for nearly two hundred years under the shadow of trees, on the grassy peninsula, formed by a sharp bend of the river. It is but a small square stone edifice, wherein a party of perhaps twenty might shelter from a hill-country storm; which, out of respect for the memory of the original builder, has been dutifully repaired. Newly cut over the door appears the inscription, PISCATORIUM SACRUM, 1674, and below it the monogram displaying the initials C C and I W curiously interwoven. The door is locked, but peeping in at one of the windows, we can see that the interior is as plain as the exterior, and is furnished with a table and a row of elbow chairs.

Did Cotton resort hither while engaged on his ten days' task, his version of a *Complete Angler*, with paper and ink-horn, and pen his "directions for taking a trout?" With what words he presented it to his "most worthy father and friend," the honest brothers of the angle will call to mind. "If," he says, "you can allow it passable for a thing of this nature, you will then do me honour if the cipher fixed and carved in the front of my little fishing-house may be here explained." And how the associations familiar to the spot are heightened in interest when we remember that

old Izaak himself, the most devout and cheerful-hearted of anglers, travelled from London to these outlandish parts to visit his "son," that he sat within those walls, and fished in that trouty river. Has he not told us what he thought thereof among his happy and genial descriptions?

Where the river leaves the meadow there rises a bold gray cliff; green pastures swell up on the right; on the left firs and limes intermingle their hues, and diffuse a verdurous gloom, and drooping alders darken the farther edge of the stream; and as we approach the cliff the river, tumbling over a low dam, refreshes our ears with the bubbling, throbbing, splashing noise of running water. A rustic fence stretches from the cliff to the water, but the gate is not locked, and in a few moments we enjoy the most delightful of surprises—those which Nature prepares for us. High rises the perpendicular cliff bedecked and fringed with long trailing weeds and grasses, ferns and harebells: small ash trees and shrubs grow from the crevices, and the summit is overhung by a massy cornice of foliage. In and out curves the weather-stained crag, here narrowing the grassy pathway to a few feet, there forming a cool recess where you may sit and enjoy the harmony of quivering leaves and rumbling water, and watch the light foam-streaks and bubbles as they dance away to the gloom under the hollow of the bank. And if haply Cotton be your wander-book, you may test his descriptive out-pourings on the very scene of their inspiration.

"O my beloved nymph, fair Dove,
Princess of rivers, how I love
Upon thy flowery banks to lie,
And view thy silver stream

When gilded by a summer's beam !
And in it all thy wanton fry,
Playing at liberty,
And with my angle, upon them
The all of treachery
I ever learn'd, industriously to try !"

The whole air seems vocal, for there is a brisk wind, and Nature is in one of her musical moods. Quick and lively sounds her voice among the topmost boughs, blending with the murmurs and whispers that lurk in the nooks and play amid creepers of the crags, and with the deep solemn roar resounding in the firs, and the distant belfry chimes, and ever the stream joins in with liquid tones.

Anon the defile widens: high mounts the great green slope of the left bank, wearing a crown of trees, and with a gray wall of rock for base. Here and there rocks peep through the turf, or huge crags shoulder boldly up, and arrest the eye by their castellated appearance. And on each side, as if to adorn Nature, hollies, and laurels, and shrubs singly and in groups are planted; and the dark green of the Cotone aster has a pretty effect at the foot of the cliff. Here pausing to look round, you find yourself in a deep basin of rock and foliage.

Every bend reveals a change of scene; we come to higher cliffs, fronted by sycamore and ash that vie with the precipice in height. Dam succeeds to dam, until the river's voice rivals the sonorous cadence of the grove. And there before us rises the tall needle of which *Viator* speaks in the memorable colloquy— "What have we got here? a rock springing up in the middle of the river! this is one of the oddest sights that ever I saw." And *Piscator* replies, "Why, sir,

from that Pike that you see standing up there distant from the rock, this is called Pike-pool. And young Mr. Izaak Walton was so pleased with it, as to draw it in landscape, in black and white, in a blank book I have at home, as he has done several prospects of my house also." Izaak the elder describes the pike as "a rock in the fashion of a spire-steeple, and almost as big."

At length, after numerous windings, we emerge from the defile, and turning presently to look back on the mazy scene, and the rocks which old Izaak says are "much higher and bigger than St. Paul's church before it was burnt," we may agree with Viator that it is "a marvellous pretty place."

A warning to trespassers stands by the gate which we have presently to get over: it will hardly deter a lover of the romantic in scenery from a stroll through the defile where the charm of the natural features is heightened by historical and personal associations: where the wanderer will say with the bard of the stream—

> "Oh, how happy, here 's our leisure!
> Oh, how innocent our pleasure!
> Oh ye valleys! Oh ye mountains!
> Oh ye groves, and crystal fountains!
> How I love, at liberty,
> By turns to come and visit ye!"

Now we pass by stepping-stones to the Derbyshire side, and cross a steep pasture leaving the warm woody hollow for naked and stony slopes, and a wild narrow glen, the character of which seems to be foretokened by the rugged cliff that guards its entrance. Beyond it rises Wolfscote hill; as grim in aspect as in name; and when we cross the bridge to the right bank, and have taken a few steps downward, we are again shut in

by lofty heights; but how different from those of Pike-pool! Here the vegetation is wanting: take whichever side you will, it represents Stonyshire. And so it continues for two or three miles, with combinations of crag, and screes, all gray, purple and yellow dotting and striping the green hill-side, which, further chequered by scorched brown patches, displays striking combinations of colour; and what with the sudden and frequent bends, and the sunshine touching the upper elevations, the effects of light and shadow are beautifully diversified. The sun is at our back, whereby the commingling lines appear and shift before us as we saunter on; but turn and look up stream—how cold and monotonous the same landscape looks when viewed in that direction. At times we enter a bend into which the sun looks without a screen, and we have the brightness on both sides, and only where the rays slant behind the next jutting point, does it deepen into purple. Here the river-bed is fully disclosed, as stony as the shores, and the stream laughs merrily as the overpowering radiance falls on its rippling surface, and hastens onwards caressing alike the boulders bare and bleached, the dewy moss-coated stones, the tiny grassy islets, and the clumps of rushes that lie in its course. At times our path leads through long beds of thistles, now through broad-leafed batterdocks, then a few field-flowers and little mounds of wild thyme impart beauty and fragrance to the narrow margin, or a sheep-track among scattered daisies is the only course: a mere shelf between the water and the precipitous hill-side. Farther, and the narrowness is narrower and the steepness steeper, and we double a rocky point on the handbreadth of a ledge and must scramble along the slope, for the hills meet foot to foot below, and the

river, stinted in width, deepens, and becomes for a while slow and silent. Look down on the water; there the dale inverted appears reflected in its darksome current, widening down, down, down to the lowest peak, and beyond, at infinite depths, spreads the bright blue sky.

Well is this long ravine named Narrowdale. The hills for the most part rise wall-like, leaving you to imagine the height of their unseen crests. Dr. Plot calls them "mountains hardly passable; some of them being," as he describes, "of so vast a height, that in rainy weather I have frequently seen the tops of them above the clouds; particularly those of Narrowdale are so very lofty, that the inhabitants there for that quarter of the year, wherein the sun is nearest the tropic of Capricorn, never see it at all; and at length when it does begin to appear again, they never see it till about one by the clock, which they call thereabout the Narrowdale noon; using it proverbially when they would express a thing done late at noon."

Of inhabitants however we see none. Here and there a cattle-pen, or sheep-washing pool, or a brood of ducks swimming in the shallows, or sheep feeding on the slopes, or a path slanting up a break in the hills, are the only indications that the neighbourhood is inhabited. Hence the charm of solitude is complete: the only sounds that break upon the silence —ripplings and bleatings—are in harmony therewith, and you may saunter or lie down, and read or meditate undisturbed. Delightful solace is this for days in the Black Country, for an atmosphere of smoke, and the din of machinery.

Cliff and crag, scree and sward still succeed, now towering high aloft as rock-towers and bastions, now

in a bright green cone or ridge, streaked in places with gorse, or scrub, or the edge of a distant plantation peeps over the brow. You would perhaps fancy from the sight of wood, that the features were about to soften; but the next defile is barer than any, and looks as if the loose stone of two counties had been for ages flung on its slopes; and shows us on a smaller scale one of those stony gorges which amaze travellers in the Alps.

Presently coming to a sharp bend, where the dale opens and leaves a margin of pasture fringed by alders and loosestrife, and the stream talks cheerfully, we stop to dine, choosing a soft turfy ridge on the brink as our couch. We might find a public-house at Alstonefield by an excursion into the hills on our right; but who would eat beneath a roof on such a day as this, that could feast on bread and cheese in the glad sunshine between the hills, and dip his cup into the fast-flowing Dove? where you may pour libations and drink at will, and imagine Naiads with glistening necks and immortal eyes rising from the stream to accept the homage.

We have a long half-day yet before us, and may eat and muse at leisure. Mind and body shall both rest; and for awhile none but dreamy fancies are entertained, all as bright as the sunshine. Or if a serious mood should follow, let us peruse the contemplative man's words where he says:—"When seated under a shady tree, on the side of a pleasant river, or moving about on the banks of it, thou art otherwise pursuing thy recreations; when the gliding of waters, the singing of birds, the bleating of flocks, the lowing of cattle, and the view of delightful prospects, and the various occupations of rural industry shall dispose

thee to thought and reflection; let the beauties of Nature, the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Almighty, as manifested in the production of His creatures, the order and course of His providence in their preservation, the rewards of a good life, and the certainty of thy end, be the subject of thy meditation."

Meanwhile, lying supine, ours shall be the roving eye and listening ear; and not a cloud shall float across the vast azure, or a cloud-shadow fleck the hill-sides, but our eyes shall watch the slow motion from ridge to ridge; and not a bee shall hum, or a leaf whisper unheeded; and our spirit refreshed thereby shall retain the quickening for weeks to come.

But thought claims to rove as well as eye, seeking what may be apt to the occasion; and here comes a passage to memory in which Drayton makes mention of the group of counties through which we have journeyed. He is describing the embarkation of the troops—each shire under its proper cognizance—that went to win the victory of Agincourt, and says:—

"Stout Warwickshire, her ancient badge, the bear;
Wor'ster, a pear-tree laden with the fruit;
A golden fleece, and Hereford doth wear;
Stafford, a hermit in his homely suit;
Shropshire, a falcon tow'ring in the air;
And for the shire whose surface seems most brute,
Derby, an eagle, sitting on a root,
A swathed infant holding in her foot."

It is amusing in these days, when a trip to Spitzbergen is a summer recreation for the yacht-club, to read what travellers said of Derbyshire even in the last century. The region was frightful; the hills too steep for human foot, the dales ever wasted by floods, while caverns and chasms were but the fitting accompaniment

of scenery that inspired only terror. One honest wayfarer who describes the Derwent as "that fury of a river," expressed himself heartily thankful to leave the fearful hills behind, and get into the tame sodden levels of Huntingdon and Cambridgeshire.

But let us go on with our walk. More crags, and another bend or two, and we come to a road that crosses the dale, and a mill standing by the bridge; did time serve we might follow that road up into Hopedale, and far enough to see the wild slopes of the Weever Hills; but for the present we forsake not the Dove. On the right appears the big hill which *Viator*, intimidated by its steepness, took leave of with the words "Why, farewell, Hanson Toot! I'll no more on thee: I'll go twenty miles about first. Puh! I sweat that my shirt sticks to my back." We cross once more to the Staffordshire side, and come presently to another mill and a little village, where we recross by a bridge which, though built of stone, would justify the illustration in the colloquy before quoted when *Viator* asks: "What's here? the sign of a bridge? Do you use to travel with wheelbarrows in this country?" And *Piscator* answers, "Not that ever I saw, sir; why do you ask that question?"

V. "Because this bridge certainly was made for nothing else: why! a mouse can hardly go over it: it is not two fingers broad."

P. "You are pleasant, and I am glad to see you so; but I have rid over the bridge many a dark night."

Although *Viator* would not make the same venture "for a thousand pounds," and half wished to cross his bridge "on all four," there is nothing alarming in the passage, and there is width enough for a horse between the parapets though hardly for a wheelbarrow.

From the slope on the farther side there is a pleasing view of the little village: all so simple and rustic; little gardens, little meadows, hedgerow fences, belts of willows, villagers sitting at their doors in quiet gossip, poultry scratching and clucking here and there, all make up a picture which seems the prettier amid the setting of foliage, and by contrast with the stony scenes through which we have passed. There are signs too of haymaking; and in that low mass of cliff on the right lurks a one-syllabled echo. The path leads us round the slope, and between brambles and dog-roses, and then the reach which bears the name of Milldale, disappears, and we come within sight of a large pointed arch crowned by a turret in the tall cliff on the left,—the extremity of the Dovedale most resorted to by visitors.

Milldale had been the limit of my upward ramble on two former occasions: I had now realised a long-felt wish to walk down Dove-side from Pike-pool; and am persuaded that for one with time enough, Dovedale is most satisfactorily explored by the downward route. As we have seen, the two leagues above Milldale possess a charm of their own, very different from the charm that invests the two miles next below us: there stern and naked; here soft and abounding in verdure; but there, a depth of solitude which prevails not here; for here come frequent parties of wondering visitors, whose voices are heard giving utterance to their delight and admiration: sentiments none the less pleasurable even should the happy ramblers forget that poets and travellers of renown have praised the scenery.

The large arch which loses its regularity of form as we come near, is the mouth of a cave in the lime-stone, and the turret is seen to be merely a prominence

of the cliff. The cave is not deep, and though weather-stained and dusty, it shows you somewhat concerning the bubbles which were blown in limestone rocks in the primeval ages. You see strange pockets, domes, niches, and canopies, and hollows which are honey-combed or crystalline, and great crevices, and other interesting traces of Nature's vigorous hand among her foundation stones. Looking forth from the mouth of the cave you see how the river runs through a rocky entrance-gate to the fairer scenes beyond. As if to match therewith its waters are clearer and more sparkling than above; the mill-dam having intercepted its "obscuration of terrestrieties," to borrow a phrase from the old chemists.

Now we have a well-beaten path, and pacing slowly onwards we behold here and there huge columnar masses of rock—hanging woods sweeping down to the water's edge—crags thrusting out their rugged shoulders as if to bar the way—cliffs rushing upwards as if to rival the hill tops—irregular slopes crowded with brambly thickets, and dotted with luxuriant thorns—copse-like patches of hazel—a dell shut in by yet higher cliffs, backed by woods, range above range showing lovely slopes of varied green—a gorge, and Pickering Tor guarding the entrance on one side, on the other a pinnacle springing from the crag—and a cavern accessible by the steepest of paths, high up in the cliff on the left—and the river running swiftly with tumultuous babble, now half hiding from the sun under overhanging branches, or circling slowly in quiet pools floored with cresses, fringed by rushes and willow-weed, while in the hollows of the bank grow little forests of nettles—a mighty cliff that dips its foot into the stream where the only pathway is stolen from the channel by a layer

of stony lumps—then more trees and paths running up and down the slopes under their shadow, or through the rank grass by the side of the river—and a rocky knoll whence to take a parting view, and admire the acres of firwoods that clothe the opposite steep, as with a garment—then, a furlong farther, and with a sudden turn to the right we follow the stream between Thorpe Cloud and Bunster, and crossing to the right bank we come presently to a gate where hangs the sign of the *Izaak Walton*, and with a good appetite for tea.

The hotel stands in a commanding position on the lower slope of Bunster, and enjoys a cheerful prospect, which we also may enjoy from the window, while at our repast. Then by the field-path from the rear of the house we go down to look at the pretty village of Ilam, in the valley of the Manifold, which with houses, school, and cottages built in the picturesque gabled style, with spiral chimneys, may be taken as a model village. The river, as if rejoicing over its recent emergence into daylight, flows glinting past with as lively a stream as where we saw it this morning a few miles to the north. Now tall trees overshadow it along the confines of a park, and with these, and the three-arched bridge, and the memorial cross, the banks and plots of grass, the beds of flowers, and the well-kept houses, we can combine many a pleasing picture. The cross, which is at the same time a fountain, is a handsome structure, satisfying to the eye, though it be not of the olden time. It perpetuates the memory of one of the Russell family to whom the estate belongs. We can walk into the park, and look at the finely-seated Tudor mansion from a distance, for the lodge-keeper intimates that we must not venture farther than to walk round the church, which stands a little within the

fence. The tower has a gabled roof, which reminds one of Swiss churches, and the whole edifice shows proof of careful restoration. For the same reason that we keep within the prescribed limit—it is Sabbath evening—we forego a sight of the tomb in the church, one of Chantrey's masterworks, which represents a father stricken in years calling down a blessing on his daughter and her children who are grouped around his dying bed. But we may look round on the noble sweep of woods, and listen to the voice of the Manifold, and admire the stately flag-tower of the mansion, and feel that Ilam is a very agreeable halting-place.

Bunster and Thorpe Cloud, the latter a graceful cone, are striking objects in the view on returning from the park. Having twice climbed to the top of the Cloud in former years, I now wished to try another point of view; and began to mount the flank of Bunster. What with the steepness and slipperiness of the turf from dry weather, the difficulty of retaining foothold was such as to render the ascent very laborious. I mastered the difficulty by taking off my boots, and walked without further slip to the summit. The height is twelve hundred feet; and the prospect one that repays the exertion. The course of the Manifold to its confluence with the Dove is shown by a double and sinuous line of trees; and Dove shooting from between the two hills that terminate its Dale, enters an open vale, that broadens as it descends, bordering the river with fat pastures and teeming fields, and dark-hued masses of wood.

"Such streams, Rome's yellow Tiber cannot show,
The Iberian Tagus, or Ligurian Po,
The Maese, the Danube, and the Rhine
Are puddle water all compared with thine;

> And Loire's pure streams yet too polluted are
> With thine, much purer, to compare;
> The rapid Garonne, and the winding Seine
> Are both too mean,
> Beloved Dove, with thee
> To vie priority;
> Nay, Tame and Isis, when conjoin'd, submit,
> And lay their trophies at thy silver feet,"

exclaims the angler-poet, who dearly loved, "from some aspiring mountain's crown, giddy with pleasure to look down."

Eastwards the landscape looks warm and rich with abundance of foliage, and breadth of tillage; westwards the aspect is somewhat bare, but cultivators are aspiring, and fields of grain are growing even on the broad-backed ridge that hems in the Dale. Farms lie pleasantly in the hollows, and rural folk are sauntering along the footpaths; and the evening is so calm, that while gnats play here above the summit, the sound of children's voices is heard softened by distance, and the streaming Manifold sends up a gentle murmur. The village, the hall, and the hotel look as if care could never come to them amid their inclosure of trees, so peaceful is the scene lighted by the slanting rays of the evening sun. A party of adventurous guests from the hotel have scrambled to the top of the Cloud; but Bunster, greater in altitude, looks down upon them and their lofty seat.

The broad shadow of the hill was rapidly lengthening when I descended straight to the hotel, and started for Ashbourn, a distance of about five miles. The road is hilly and crooked enough to render the walk agreeable. A new *Dove Dale Hotel* by the wayside is perhaps a demonstration that visitors have multiplied since the extension of the railway. At Thorpe the

sign of *The Pikeral* allures some anglers as the Mayfly does the trout. From this village a steep stony lane, not unlike that which frightened *Viator*, leads you up to a field-path, and the path, if you follow it wisely, to Ashbourn, cutting off the great sweep of the road around the hill.

Congreve is said to have written one or more of his plays in a grotto near Ilam: it was in a cottage not far from Ashbourn that Moore composed *Lalla Rookh*, a poem which fascinates us once in our lives. Ashbourn church on the base of a steep hill has a remarkably tall and elegant spire; and if you are ambitious you have only to climb the upward path to bring your eye on a level with the apex. Besides architecture of the thirteenth century, the church contains some curiously carved monuments, which, if the sexton be an early riser, we shall perhaps be able to see before our departure in the morning.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Another Black Country—Longton, the Scape-goat of the Potteries—Potters' Recreations and Makeshifty Ways—Seggar Walls—Ugly Macadamization—Crates, Straw, Poles, and Sticks—Stoke—Minton Memorial—Extensive Works—Clay from Cornwall—Girl Artists—Men Artists—A Difference—Chemistry of Colours—The Clerk of Barthomley—Paper Landscapes—Parian Artists—The Show-Rooms—The Tile-Works—Ingenious Operations—Mosaic—A Drive—Hanley—Burslem—Tunstall—Improving Signs—Congleton and Neighbourhood—The Biddlemoor Men—Who sold their Bible to buy a Bear?—Etruria—Conceited Hatmakers—Wealth of Production—Moral Conditions—Night Scene—Trentham—Colwich—Cannock Chace—The Charm of Solitude—The Brooklet—Sound of the Sea—Ancient Cank, Modern Commerce—The Trent—Rugeley—Lichfield—Recollections and Memorials of Johnson—The Cathedral—The Fatal Bullet—Restorations—The Affable Verger—The Tower-Top—St. Chad's—Hospitable Reception—More Reminiscences of Brave Old Samuel—A Chance of Ants' Nests—Gravel and Peat—Dangers of Drainage—Drive to Beaudesert—The Castle Ring—Slowgomotive Travelling.

North Staffordshire has a Black Country, as well as the south, comprehended in 'the Potteries.' I had once had a glimpse of the district while on a railway-journey; and now planned to see as much as could be seen thereof during a walk from one end to the other. So, having borne with exemplary patience the delays of two North Staffordshire junctions in the trip of twenty miles from Ashbourn, I alight still early in the forenoon at Longton, under clouds of smoke that darken the air, and amid heaps of broken crockery that bestrew the ground, as we shall see, for

miles around. The town looks busy enough, has indeed the aspect of a hardworking town, with furnaces—huge cones peering here and there above the houses, and is dingy and dusty even in its best parts; and because that the furnaces are low, the smoke sweeps and eddies through the streets before rising up to the murky cumulus. That it lives by brittle ware is manifest; crockery and china-shops and workshops not a few, and exhibitions of moulds and earthenware at upper windows, mark the staple; and men and boys, and women and girls, aproned and labour-stained, whose appearance harmonises with their habitation, out-number all other folk on the footways. Though the booksellers' shops display indications of a taste for reading, Longton, which dislikes being identified with its ugly consort Lane End, is the scapegoat for the whole district. Censure the consequences of neglect, note an eyesore, blame manners and habits wherever you may happen to be in the Potteries, you will be told in reply that your observations are true as regards Longton, but not the other places. Find no fault with Stoke, Hanley, Burslem, or Tunstall; but abuse Longton as much as you will.

Recreations of the olden time still flourish in the region, as indicated by flashy placards notifying *Stoke Wakes; The Wakes' Monday; A Grand Gala*, and so forth. Go to one of these wakes, and you will soon see that the sense of enjoyment is much more boisterous in the north than in the south; and a sojourn here would make you aware of the strength of class-feeling, and jealousy with which the working population maintain their rights. Once, during a strike, they placarded the whole country with

"Ye Potters brave of Staffordshire,
From Tunstall unto Lane End town,
Still maintain the conflict dire;
Still retain your just renown."

Commencing our walk northwards we come to poor outskirts where the workshops have windows that might have been made in Queen Anne's days, so thick are the bars and so small the panes. The succession of kilns and workshops is such that you can hardly say where one town ends and another begins; and to look for rural country is hopeless. It is the Black Country of the southern end of the county, but with a difference. If there, havoc and uproar prevail, here rubbish and makeshift have the mastery; and instead of fields or wayside greens, you see corners and open spaces overspread with broken crockery in amazing quantities, varied in places by heaps of brickbats and condemned seggars. Here and there a ragged hedge-row is struggling for existence, and in vain; and of all the squalid makeshifty sights you ever saw, the gaps of a hedge filled by a pile of seggars is the most so. The practice may be economical, but certainly is not pretty or picturesque: a fence all seggars is ugly enough, but hideous when interspersed among the green quickset. Pigsties too are built of seggars filled with earth or ashes, that the walls formed by the uncouth things may be solid enough to resist the thrust of grunting snouts. And then there are great heaps of clay, and stacks of crates, and many a window patched with paper, and smoke rolling everywhere. After all it would seem that the shabby is most in keeping with the scene, for a respectable modern house with a lawn before it standing near a large manufactory, appears sadly out of place, and quite

unable to keep itself clean in such a grimy and dusty neighbourhood.

Side streets and lanes of little cottages are rarely attractive; but do not expend all your pity on the poor thoroughfares of a large town till you have seen the side streets of the Potteries bountifully macadamized with broken seggars, or a layer of crock-sherds. After that you will be at no loss where to commiserate.

Now a wagon laden with closely-packed crates or highpiled with straw, passes along the road, or a large barrel mounted on wheels, and filled apparently with whitewash. It is a barrel of 'slip,' for some petty manufacturer, who buys his supply of the article at one of the principal Works rather than prepare it for himself: and this constitutes an important item in the trade of the district. Or a train rattles up laden with coal, or with poles and sticks grown in the shires of Worcester and Warwick for the crate-makers. Looking to the right and left as you go along, you will see many a stack of these poles and sticks, oak, ash, and hazel, and men busy sorting and chopping and bending and weaving them into crates. "I can't make more 'n two a day of the best and strongest;" said one of the men in answer to my inquiry, "we gets two shillin' or half a crown a-piece for the makin'."

More phenomena. Broken seggars and crockery as ballast for the railway; and the embankments coated with crockery: dry and durable no doubt; but very ugly. And a cottage with its casement leads and sash-bars painted scarlet: and deep excavations—quarries as we might say, of clay; and great heaps of drain-tubes and sewage pipes, and more and more kilns, and a view of patches of landscape which show how pretty

the country must have been when Nature had it to herself.

Now, continuous lines of new-looking houses, and we are on the edge of Stoke, a rising and ambitious town, with good shops and more cleanliness of aspect than any other in the district. It does not become squalid in the busy quarter, and that it cares for something besides work, is there shown by the Minton memorial, not a statue, something better: a handsome red-brick building which is to be head-quarters of an Institute, with a drawing-school and reading-room.

The working-people, if appearances may be trusted, share in the superiority; and among things noticeable, as we have already seen on the way hither, are the good looks of the women: in which particular North Staffordshire contrasts very favourably with the South. Observe the streets where they dwell, and you will see that propriety of person and residence is not monopolized by the best quarters.

At a pleasant house on the hillside overlooking the vale of Trent, I met with an unexpectedly agreeable reception, and an introduction to Minton's Works—the grand attraction of all sight-seers who visit Stoke. That fifteen hundred persons—men and women, boys and girls, are employed, at once demonstrates the magnitude of the operations there carried on. The ranges of buildings extending along both sides of the road, constitute in themselves no inconsiderable street.

What we saw at Swadlincote will have prepared us for what is to be seen here, for the preliminaries are essentially the same; though applied to aristocratic clay, the china clay, which we saw dug and manufactured during our walk through Cornwall four years ago. We shall do well to remember that it is one of

the constituents of that far-remote county which, transported hither and mixed with clay from Dorsetshire, and flint and bone, and converted into elegant, delicate, and useful forms, brings fame and wealth to Staffordshire, as cotton does to Lancashire, and wool to Yorkshire, and exalts the reputation of Minton, Copeland, Devonport, and others.

The clay mixture is transformed into 'slip' by the ordinary process of maceration and boiling; and plates, basins, jugs and cups and saucers are produced by the processes of throwing and moulding, and a whirl in the lathe. It is in the decoration and finishing that the advance beyond ordinary ware is exemplified; and herein light and graceful work abounds for the fingers of women and girls. Many a stair will you mount, and many a long workshop will be visited before we have seen all the tasteful operations. The painting is commenced upon the ware after it has been once through the fire. The girls sit at long narrow benches with the required colours before them, and by the side of each stands a revolving pedestal or 'whirler,' on which the article to be ornamented is placed for facility of workmanship. For instance, if lines or bands are to be drawn round near the edge of a plate, the girl having charged her pencil with colour, applies the point to the plate, bowl, or whatever else, while by twirling the whirler with her left hand, the line is produced much more accurately and expeditiously than if the pencil were moved. Wherever a pencil can be placed, the lines can be drawn; and many kinds of ornamentation are producible by this simple appliance. Such work as that seems but pastime to a spectator; and certainly the ranks and squares of damsels look content and cheerful. Knowing that some had been

members of a drawing-class, and noticing their pleasing and intelligent expression, I inquired whether any of them had invented new patterns or designs. That the answer was in the negative is significant, and corroborative of the argument that

> "Woman is not undevelopt man,
> But diverse."

"No," said the conductor, "it doesn't seem to be in the women to invent, take what pains you will with them. If you want invention you must go to the men."

By long practice the men who paint the flower-work and foliage have become remarkably expert: call for a group of any kind of flowers, and by a few strokes of the pencil they sketch the outlines and lay on the colours with a rapidity surprising to the inexperienced. Lilies, roses, pansies or fuchsias, there they appear on the plate or dish, beautiful rivals of living Nature. The choicest patterns, and most elaborate designs are painted by accomplished artists, who take time and work them up to the highest possible pitch of perfection. Among the party working in a room by themselves sat a venerable looking man of more than threescore and ten, who by the proofs of his skill on a *déjeûner* tray showed that his hand still retained its cunning. In another room I saw how landscapes are produced: the subject having been engraved on a copper-plate, an impression is taken, not on paper, but on a flexible slice of glue, from which it is transferred to the dish, and lightly rubbed with a powder colour—blue, green, pink, or any other—an operation of a few seconds. In this the chemist's art is called into exercise to ascertain what the colour will be when converted into a glass by passing through

the kiln. To an unpractised eye in this case, before and after appear to have no connection: the finished pink, for example, is a brownish tint when freshly laid on, and is composed, in chemical terms, of acid stannate of oxide of chromium with stannate of lime. Nearly all the colours are metallic oxides combined with a flux of red lead, borax, or flint. Green, for instance, is produced from chromium; orange and shades of yellow from uranium and antimony; red from suboxide of copper. Gold, reduced to powder by nitric acid, is mixed with oxide of bismuth and oil of turpentine, and is applied to the ware in a liquid form. In the oven the bismuth flies off, and leaves the gold firm upon the surface. Many a refined experiment as to the action of fire on colours when applied to clay, had to be made, and many in vain ere certainty of practice could be arrived at. The landscapes represented of the natural colours are of course the work of the artists, and some of these as well as other highly-finished ornaments cannot be finished with fewer than four firings. The more numerous the colours, the more fire.

A lady who had joined our party recognised the landscape which we saw printed and transferred, as a view of Barthomley, a village on the confines of Cheshire —to her a gratifying evidence of its fidelity. It reminded me of a story which I once heard concerning the clerk of Barthomley; and as it will bear repeating, and this is a convenient opportunity, here it is.

That unworthy prop of the church was once conveying to the colliery the vicar's annual gift of a cask of ale, and made such loving acquaintance therewith on the way, that he was found fast asleep in the cart on arrival at the pit's mouth. The miners seeing

his condition and the depletion of the cask, took him down into the pit and there left him to snore away his 'bezzlin'' fit. After some hours the thirsty soul began to hear strange and fearful noises, and opening his eyes was amazed and horror-stricken to find himself lying in a dismal place, black as night, lit only by a few wandering lights, tenanted by uncouth beings, who on seeing him move, gathered round with terrific demonstrations. What did it all mean? Had he then died unawares, and was this the result? Suddenly, one of the tormentors cried, "Who be ye? What's yer neam?" To which followed the answer in a trembling and submissive voice: "When I was alive, I was clerk of Barthomley; but any name you like to call me now, good master devil."

We pass to another room where a number of girls are ornamenting plates by an ingenious mechanical process. The pattern, whether landscape or foliage, but of one single colour, is printed on thin unglazed paper, centre and rim all in one piece. The printed sheet, lightly brushed with size or soap, by a dextrous movement of the fingers, is laid down on a plate, and rubbed into close contact. Then, holding the plate under a jet of water, the girl sponges away all the plain portion of the paper, while the pattern remains adherent and uninjured, and ready to be burnt into the substance of the clay, or, as the local bard describes—

> "So, when the paper rags are spong'd away,
> The speckled pitchers gracefully display
> The palpable and most ingenious theft
> In the impression on their bodies left."

Thus the pretty dinner service which we so often admire, has engaged the skill of engraver and printer,

of chemist and machinist, besides the numerous labourers and artificers who bring the clay into the required forms.

In another room artists, cunning in sculpture, are casting and constructing statuettes and groups of that admirable material—Parian, which is one of the inventive triumphs of North Staffordshire. The proportion of constituents is kept secret by the manufacturers; but the combination may be described generally as a basis of quickly-solidifying clay with flint, felspar, and bone, which are substances apt to vitrify. The figures and groups are cast in moulds in separate portions, and are put together by the artists, who take care that the points of union shall be undiscoverable, that the deep lines and touches shall be clean, and the expression that which it ought to be. Besides skill of hand they must possess knowledge of the material, for the shrinkage of Parian in the furnace is one inch in six.

Remembering what we saw at Swadlincote we may now form a fair notion of the potter's handicraft. We there saw its modest, here in a walk through the showrooms we may see its proudest manifestations. Contrast them in thought with the labours of the ancient Saxon Tile-wright; a term which, by the way, still exists in the proper name Tellwright. What skill and taste are therein displayed, and how much of magnificence and grace, as those who surveyed the Ceramic Court in the Great Exhibition will perhaps remember. The potter is certainly not the hindmost among those who are endeavouring to show how susceptible the useful is of the beautiful. And after all, it is perhaps for the useful that the reputation of our manufacturers is most deserving of honour: in

excellence of common pottery they excel all the rest of the world.

The manufacture of encaustic tiles, created entirely by the intelligent perseverance of the late Mr. Minton, is carried on in separate premises, where the signs of business are not less active than in the china-works. You perhaps imagine beforehand that the tiles are made of clay, and would hardly believe that they are made of powder. Yet such is the fact, as we may see in a ground-floor workshop which is furnished with a powerful stamping press, and a large heap of brown powder, as fine almost as flour. The workman fills the mould placed on the bed of the press with the powder, brings down the ram by a swing of the lever, thereby striking a light blow to expel the air from the parallelogram of powder, and follows by a heavy blow which compresses it into a tile hard enough to be handled without breaking. The pressure is available from fifty to a hundred tons at pleasure; white tiles requiring the heaviest. Powder of different colours is used according to the colour required in the tiles, and as in the ornamentation of china, the colour is altered by the subsequent firing; brown for example becomes red. They are fired in seggars, and shrink during the process a quarter-inch in six inches. The variegated or encaustic tiles are made of clay in a screw-press which, while cutting them to the proper dimensions, makes a sunk impression of the pattern on the surface. Into this sunk pattern the coloured clay intended to produce the design or ornament is poured, and when sufficiently set is scraped off level with the surface of the tile, a layer of perforated clay is applied to the back or under side, to prevent warping, and the tile is then ready for the oven.

After the firing the tiles have a somewhat metallic ring, and are, as popularly described, of everlasting wear. Many an anxious hour was spent over the experiments before the right composition and combination was discovered, which would shrink equally in all parts, and go through the fire without cracking or warping. The discovery was one worth striving for, and the success remains, a practical memorial of the originator.

The demand for these tiles must be great, judging from the ample supplies in the store-rooms. From quite plain you may pass to simple and elaborate patterns inlaid of various colours, and devices for borders and centres. And there are shelves laden with what look like many-coloured dice; small cubes which are prepared by the same process as the tiles for mosaic work; and perhaps you will see a few men bending over a mosaic floor which they are busily putting together in readiness for setting with Portland cement. And then, if you wish to see how well a floor of tiles looks after some years of wear, the colonnade of Stoke railway-station affords an example.

To economise the hours, and give me time for a glance at local society in the evening, my kind entertainers arranged for my seeing the Potteries beyond Stoke from the seat of a carriage. The features are similar to those already described, with a more hilly country, and the road ascending and descending through, as it still seems, one long continuous town. Works are numerous, working-people more numerous, and children swarm, playing on the highway. Smoke still prevails: the gigantic cones abut in places immediately on the footways, black chimneys rise aloft, on the distant heights, and on the nearer slopes you see cones,

chimneys and cottages, and everywhere signs of crockery, and here and there more stacks of crates, poles and sticks. So, through Hanley; then Burslem rises before us murkily on the long slope of a hill, a busy place, with a pretentious looking town-hall, and the potters' wives all standing at their doors enjoying the smoky sunshine. As well as signs of crockery you see signs of social improvements, that the worst is no longer to be tolerated even in the Potteries; and coming to Tunstall you will hardly pass the handsome market-hall without alighting to look at the proper and praiseworthy arrangement of the interior. How is it that London has all the ugly market-houses and ugly drinking-fountains, and lamp-pillars, and the provincial towns all the handsome ones?

We drove to the northern extremity of Tunstall, the last of the Pottery towns, beyond which there are but two or three tall chimneys to interfere with the prospect of a still more hilly country that stretches away to the borders of Cheshire. A few miles farther would bring us to Congleton, a ribbon-weaving town, weaving every week, as an overlooker once told me, as much ribbon as would extend from Congleton to London. Being a place somewhat out of the world, it betakes itself for habitual recreation to tippling. Nevertheless it weaves the very best plain ribbons in Europe, and is worth a visit for its neighbourhood. Mow Cop commands fine prospects, even to the Mersey; the ruins of Biddulph manor-house look picturesque; and on Biddulph moor dwell the Biddle moor-men, as they are locally called, who preserve a curious tradition as to their origin. Among the Knights Crusaders who returned in safety to their homes, was the lord of the adjacent manor, who brought in his train one of the

outlandish Paynim. After awhile the Saracen was appointed bailiff of the estate, and with this claim to consideration, he married an English wife, and became the progenitor of the Moor-men. So runs the tradition, and it is in part confirmed, as is said, by certain marked peculiarities still observable among the isolated community. A friend of mine who about ten years ago strolled into their settlement to see what it was like, was stoned out of it without mercy, because he strenuously refused to be bitten by the dog.

Cockfighting, "on the quiet," as the phrase runs, still lingers here and there as a pastime on the Cheshire border. Congleton was once famous for bear-baiting; and if when in a mixed company in these parts you wish to discover the Congletonians, put the question, "Who sold their Bible to buy a Bear?" For, as tradition tells, the clerk of that ancient town was also bear-warden, and he on one occasion when the exchequer was empty and a bear absolutely indispensable, scrupled not to sell the church-Bible to accomplish his purpose. Hence, Who sold their Bible to buy a Bear? rouses the indignation of Congleton to this day.

While descending the hill from this northernmost limit of our journey, let us recall that within a district ten miles in length and half as much in width, we have seen five towns on the main road alone, and a considerable number of the population, which at the last census comprehended more than 84,000. We may diverge on either hand, and still see pottery-works in full activity. Etruria, on the right, perpetuates the name and fame of Wedgewood; and while it produces articles of the best in kind and form, is perhaps his best memorial. About half an hour's walk from Stoke in the same direction, would bring us to Newcastle-under-Line, a

considerable town, which is not a little self-conceited because its situation is not among those "common potters," as if dulness and making policemen's hats were so much more desirable. Hence we see that this district may be regarded as a smoky belt from the centre of which a man may escape by a summer evening's walk, into pleasant landscapes. It is a district which contributes largely to our commerce, the value of the earthenware and porcelain exported in 1858 having amounted to £1,150,607, to say nothing of home consumption. The neighbourhood moreover is rich in coal, iron, and limestone: the two latter are sent to the furnaces in the Black Country, and so brisk is the demand, that walls which were built some years ago of ironstone in ignorance of its quality, have recently been pulled down and converted into metal. The greater part of the Victoria Bridge at Montreal is of North Staffordshire iron.

At Hanley on the way back we joined a very agreeable family party for the evening, whereby I had opportunity for comparing notes, and to hear from trustworthy sources that the moral condition of the Potteries, far from being so low as reported by detractors, will bear not unfavourable comparison with other districts. In estimating the facts we must always bear in mind, as I have elsewhere stated, that popular manners are rougher and ruder to the north of Coventry than to the south; and then we shall understand that a want of polish in the Potteries does not necessarily imply depravity. In the northern counties you may see the tobacco-pipe between the lips of the gentle sex, and the Potteries are no exception, for some of the damsels whose good looks have attracted our notiec are fond of smoking and beer-drinking. But the popu-

lation as a whole is not open to the charge of drunkenness; although of late years a facility towards the utter degradation which seems to be the essential result of spirit-drinking, has been laid in their way by the opening of a few gin-palaces.

With wages varying from half-a-crown a day for labourers, to four and five shillings for the ordinary workmen, and early employment for children, they can enjoy recreation as well as comfort. They are remarkably fond of railway-trips, and thereby indulge in many a pleasant holiday during the summer season. The condition of the savings banks testifies as to the thriftiness of a considerable number; and there is a newly-built village adjoining Stoke where every man lives in his own house. Hanley is building a Mechanics' Institute; and the men having learnt experience from strikes as well as the masters, formed a tribunal or board of arbitration eight years ago, before which the rate of wages is determined for a twelvemonth in advance, and disputes are settled to the advantage of all concerned. Should the men feel themselves aggrieved, they do not strike as formerly, but having brought their case before the arbitrators, continue their work, and on the settlement of the question, are paid the amount due to them, or not, according to the decision.

This is taking a common-sense view of the matter, which is well worthy of imitation wherever workingmen persist in stupidity. But we may be permitted to doubt whether this commendable result would have been accomplished had the men not had the right and power to strike; and thereby to secure for themselves an amount of consideration which should rather have been a happy consequence of mutual sympathy. And as regards moral observances: in no part of England

are Sunday Schools so much sought after or so earnestly supported, nowhere are contributions so promptly and generously given towards their support as here. In fact, more money is raised throughout the Potteries for Sunday Schools than for any other religious purpose.

In the drive back to Stoke by night there were to be seen the blazing coal-banks of Lord Granville's collieries, the ruddy glow of heaps of calcining iron-stone, and over all, the glare of pottery kilns. And the beholder looking around feels himself impressed by the never-ceasing activity of Trade; eager and energetic by night as by day. Trade always increasing: sinking new mines, opening new quarries, and enlarging the existing pottery-works, if not building new ones.

Another railway-trip on the morrow: past the pretty station and domain of Trentham, to Colwich, a place which reminds us indirectly of a hero as we look at the church; for there preached the father of him who raised Hodson's horse, and died a soldier's death in India. I alighted here for a few hours' ramble on Cannock Chace, the flanks of which, representing a fir-crowned hilly range, are in sight from the station. Walk down the road to Little Heywood, turn there into a lane, cross the Trent by a foot-bridge, and in less than half an hour, passing through a gate, you step suddenly from cultivated fields to the wild wastes of Cannock. Rounded slopes rise before you covered with fern, heather and gorse, offering to the wayfarer some of the attractions of a hill-country. I followed the trackway along the hollow for awhile, then strode across the heights any-whither, and found ere long that which I sought—solitude. There in a ferny coomb, a little world within itself, I lay down and

indulged in a day-dream, such as can only be dreamt in a secret place, under bright sunshine, while your eye roams afar in the expanse of blue, and from distant tree-tops there comes the sound as of an aërial chorus.

After a day in the busiest haunts of trade, 'summer luxury' seems more delightfully luxurious; and sweetly through the dream there float—

> "The intelligible forms of ancient poets,
> The fair humanities of old religion,
> The power, the beauty, and the majesty,
> That had her haunts in dell, or piny mountain,
> Or forest by slow stream, or pebbly springs,
> Or chasms and watery depths."

However, one must not spend all the hours in dreaming, even though "the heart doth need a language." I rambled farther and descended into a woody dell on the edge of a park, and explored the course of a brooklet which, clear as crystal, and cool as an underground spring, gambols along beneath the thick shadow, now overhung by alders, now bordered by thistles taller than a man, while birches shut all in with their trembling screen. The way is difficult in places, with treacherous spongy patches, and uncertain footing, but it entices you onward, regaling your nostril with the scent of mint, and you will be reluctant to turn back short of the lively springs from which the brooklet takes its rise. Shortbrook the natives call it —and truly its course to the Trent is of the briefest.

Then forcing a passage through the dense bracken on the opposite slope of the dell, I mounted to the boldest of the fir-crowned heights, exchanging the calm sultriness of the hollows for a lusty breeze, and narrow limits for a wide-spread view. Singularly contrasted

is the prospect: eastwards the fertile vale of Trent, chequered with the warm tints of harvest, with farms and villages seemingly half-buried in abundant vegetation; westwards the huge rolling undulations of the Chace, stretching away for miles—a vast solitude, with here and there a hardy fir looking half-starved in its loneliness. Far off the heights appear bald; but all are clothed with fern, bilberries, and heath, leagues upon leagues, variegated by patches of gorse and ragwort. Apart from the expanse, there is a charm in the alternations of colour produced by the innumerable undulations, some slopes appearing of a bright metallic green, others dull and rusty, while screes of gravel in places vary the surface. The contrasted prospect may be enjoyed to perfection while pacing to and fro along the edge of the firs.

I had planned to walk across the Chace to Cannock, and thence to Lichfield, but was compelled to forego the pleasure through want of time, though reluctantly, for towards the end of a holiday one covets more and more the sense of freedom inspired by a journey in the places where Nature seems unmolested. Failing the lengthened walk, I made the most of this brief excursion, enjoying the rushing sound in the fir-trees overhead, which reminded me of the far-distant sea.

Within the remembrance of persons now living, the Chace with its contiguous wastes stretched along the county from near Stafford to a few miles south of Lichfield: a bleak wild region, where travellers had at times to struggle for their lives in snowdrifts. "Antiently," says an old topographer, "Cank Wood was a large forest;" now, as we see, there are no trees, and year by year cultivation encroaches on its limits. And though the surface be poor, the Chace is rich under-

ground: numerous coal-mines have already converted its southern extremity into a black country, and as 'Cannock coal' is now sent into the London market, we may look forward, not without regret, to the time when the bright breezy Chace shall be hacked into deformity and smothered in smoke.

Warned at length to depart, I descended from the breezy hill and returned to the station. There is something so pleasing in the view of the Trent with its border of meadow and fringe of overhanging trees, and group of gliding swans, that you will be tempted to pause on the foot-bridge while recrossing the stream, to refresh your eye with quiet beauty.

On again by rail, passing Rugeley, a place now of horrid associations which you will hardly be permitted to forget, for some one of the passengers will be pretty sure to point out the house inhabited by one of the Palmer family. A few miles farther and we alight at Lichfield station, more than a mile from the town, whereby we have opportunity to survey a tame landscape, and to admire the spires which Anna Seward calls "the Ladies of the Vale."

The town is of course oppressively dull; but what matters that to a wayfarer who, for the moment, is more interested in things of a former generation than in the ways and words of the present. The dulness favours observation, and that which we have to observe is associated with the memory of no less worthy a personage than brave old Samuel Johnson. "Now we are getting out of a state of death," he said to Boswell when, on his last visit to his native town, he saw the lamps shining through the darkness of the road; and to the remark that the inhabitants seemed "an idle set of people," he retorted, "Sir, we are a city of philo-

sophers; we work with our heads, and make the boobies of Birmingham work for us with their hands." The house in which he was born retains its old-fashioned aspect, standing at the corner of the market-place; St. Mary's church, in which he was baptised, looks down on the tranquil scene as of yore; the sign of the *Three Crowns*, under which he and Bozzy had a comfortable supper "and got into high spirits," still attracts the eye of market-folk; and there facing the old-fashioned house stands the statue, which will hardly be so enduring a monument as the great English Dictionary. Go near and look at the sculptured bas-reliefs of the pedestal: on one you see the little lad three years of age seated on his father's shoulder looking heedfully at Dr. Sacheverel preaching in the cathedral; on another appears the school-boy borne in triumph on the back of one of his proud and active school-fellows; and the third represents that penitential incident of which we were reminded at Uttoxeter. It is good for us to saunter here in the sunshine and muse on these things, and remember how much we owe to that resolute, solid character in which kindness and truthfulness were so richly combined. And who that loves England and her vigorous tongue but will rejoice in the opportunity of rendering homage to the memory of Johnson?

I sauntered away to the cathedral, and walked half a dozen times round the venerable edifice, which, viewed from the western front, where the three graceful spires group themselves in appropriate finish to the architectural aspirations, appears beautifully picturesque. In this particular Lichfield and Salisbury satisfy the eye far more than some cathedrals of higher architectural reputation. I could have stood for hours

contemplating that front on which the setting sun has shed its glory for centuries. But we must pace onwards: the Bishop's palace reminds us once more of Johnson, and of 'the Swan' who sang—

> "Ah, lovely Lichfield! that so long hast shone
> In blended charms peculiarly thine own;
> Stately, yet rural; through thy choral day,
> Though shady, cheerful, and though quiet, gay."

A few paces down Dam Street, a narrow thoroughfare leading from the Close, and there, as the inscription on the house-front records, is the place where Lord Brooke fell by the fatal bullet in those stirring days when Parliament had to be king and something more. The leading Royalists of the neighbourhood had fortified the Close, and Brooke, to whom a cathedral was but as the concretion of prelacy, was giving orders to his gunners, when a shot from the roof of the choir pierced the helmet which he wore, and laid him dead. Royalists saw the judgment of Providence in the event, as it occurred on the festival of the patron saint, and would have applauded the minstrel of a later century who wrote—

> "But, thanks to Heaven, and good Saint Chad,
> A guerdon meet the spoiler had."

That the 'old cause' triumphed nevertheless we all know, but sad was the havoc and mutilation of an edifice which the besiegers did not scruple to use as a stable. All honour to the memory of Bishop Hacket for his repairs and restorations.

The desire for fitness in things architectural characteristic of our days has been awakened in Lichfield, and the interior is undergoing a restoration which will

harmonize the parts, and develop the original idea. I found the nave encumbered with scaffolding and noisy with workmen. The 'show' tombs, of which one is by Chantrey, were shut off by temporary screens, and the by no means affable verger thought himself illused by a fee of sixpence for unlocking two canvas doors. He had nothing to live upon, he said, but what the public gave him; neither had he any thing to do with letting people go up the tower, and so as afternoon service was about to begin he walked away, leaving me with an impression that he has not profited much by the many services he has heard, and that many a man would gladly give civility in return for one half the amount of fees which the old man receives from the public.

"I tell ye what 'tis, Sir," said one of the masons, "you don't look grand enough for him;" and having fetched the key, he volunteered to go with me to the top of the tower. A great sunshiny panorama is always pleasing, even when for the most part a level expanse of fields and gardens, fading away on one side into the haze of the smoky region, on the other into bluish green uplands. From this height the town looks pleasant, surrounded and sprinkled as it is by foliage; and the two large pools are not less ornamental than useful. From one of them Walsall and part of the Black Country derive their water supply. Beyond, in a full setting of trees lies St. Chad's, marked by the old gray church: and the well still flows, cool and refreshing, which perpetuates the name of the miracle-working saint who, as we are told, once hung his cloak on a sunbeam. And thinking over the history of the cathedral itself, we are led back fifteen hundred years into the Past, some four centuries beyond the time

when Offa rebuilt and enlarged the earliest church and endowed it with enviable privileges.

I walked from the Close along the margin of the pool towards a house which I had seen peeping from the trees of St. Chad's, where Dr. Charles Holland met me at his door with that sort of welcome which makes you feel as if you had arrived at home. Apart from its cheerful environment and a prospect across the pool of the three cathedral spires, the house interests a visitor by reminiscences of Johnson. You see in the adjoining grounds the trees of the elm avenue along which tradition says he once ran a race. You ascend the grand stair of dark inlaid mahogany thinking of the massive figure who trod the same steps, and you look round the rooms, which still wear the old-fashioned hospitable feature, with a wish to recall the past but for a brief hour, and listen to the wise sayings, and the sonorous phrases not unalloyed with prejudice, of the mightiest talker of his day.

Boswell has a passage relevant to the occasion which may be here transcribed profitably to all concerned. "Mrs. Aston, whom I had seen the preceding night, and her sister, Mrs. Gastrel, a widow lady, had each a house and garden, and pleasure-ground, prettily situate upon Stowhill, a gentle eminence adjoining to Lichfield. Johnson walked away to dinner there, leaving me by myself without any apology; I wondered at this want of that facility of manners, from which a man has no difficulty in carrying a friend to a house where he is intimate; I felt it very unpleasant to be thus left in solitude in a country-town, where I was an entire stranger, and began to think myself unkindly deserted: but I was soon relieved and convinced that my friend, instead of being deficient in delicacy, had

conducted the matter with perfect propriety, for I received the following note in his handwriting: 'Mrs. Gastrel, at the lower house on Stowhill, desires Mr. Boswell's company to dinner at two.' I accepted of the invitation, and had here another proof how amiable his character was in the opinion of those who knew him best."

The lady here mentioned was widow of that clergyman who cut down Shakespeare's mulberry-tree at Stratford-on-Avon.

It would have been a pleasure to tarry in such agreeable quarters, and accept the offered drive to see the wonderful ants'-nests in Hopwas-wood on the way to Tamworth, or to Beaudesert, in the opposite direction; but engagements for the next day compelled me to depart. The drive to Beaudesert did however take place three months later, when the hues of autumn dappled the woods and overspread the ferns, and on a day when the company of two witty young gentlewomen rendered the sunshine the more enjoyable.

The neighbourhood of Lichfield is remarkable for deposits of gravel, thirty feet thick in places, and filled with pebbles which geologists have tracked to their source in far-distant hills. Peat also abounds, and a noteworthy consequence of the establishment of the South Staffordshire waterworks has ensued: the underground stream which flowed slowly beneath the thick bed of peat having been drained, the soil has shrunk and sunk so much that some buildings stand all awry, as may be seen at the gasworks, and are only kept from falling by props and braces. The newly-built reading-room has cracked from the same cause, and it may be that further sinkings will occur as the subsoil dries.

The road by which we left the town crosses a portion of Staffordshire which is said to be inhabited by men, women, and Chetwynds, the latter being numerous. And better still, it is a hilly road for greater part of the eight miles, presenting a succession of pleasing views. By-and-by Beaudesert comes in sight finely situate on the bold slope of a noble park with free range for the eye over miles of country. We go near enough to scan the features of the stately Tudor mansion, the Marquis of Anglesey's country residence, then turning suddenly to the left by a track-road across the grass we mount rapidly to higher ground and look down on the house and the broad sweep of tree-tops. A little farther and we alight at the base of a great circumvallation—the Castle Ring, the chiefest elevation in this part of the county: more than seven hundred feet. Dr. Plot, who tells us that Staffordshire is happy in high situations that enjoy a cool serene air, mentions this one as commanding a view into nine counties. The summit is of considerable extent, somewhat circular in form, and is encompassed by an earthen bank and a ditch. The antiquary above-mentioned describes it as a stronghold erected by Canute at the time of the Danish irruption into Mercia in the eleventh century; and in Cank or Cannock he sees a derivation from the monarch's name: which is as good an etymology as could be expected from an author who, dedicating his book to James II. says, "if the Royal judgment be favourable, I shall little value what other men think."

We walked all round the bank, enjoying the view, from the broad slopes of fern and the copses and woods that surround the entrenchment to the far-spreading horizon. The church of Cannock can be seen, and some miles of the Chace, where to the southward tall

chimneys, showing dimly through thick smoke, mark the site of the coal-mines, and the growth of a new black country. As yet however the cloud is but a small blemish in an expanse of scenery which will leave on our mind a favourable impression of Staffordshire.

Then followed a drive through the out-park, a territory of hill and hollow enclosed from the Chace, yet retaining much of its original wildness, patched with bracken, sprinkled with luxuriant thorns, and grand old oaks, and abounding in game and deer, among which are good red-deer, such as the outlaws loved: and by-and-by after many ups and downs we left the prairie, as an American would call it—the elastic grass lands, for the hard highway, and the restriction of hedgerows.

If ever you spend happy hours on the Castle Ring, expect a compensation in the journey from Lichfield to Birmingham, which surely is the opprobrium of travelling in Staffordshire. The distance is sixteen miles, the time two hours, even for first-class passengers. I have since heard that the time is now shortened by half an hour, sometimes three quarters; yet even with this improvement it is but slow-go-motive travelling.

"What a delightful place for our school's annual holiday!" said Temperans, when he heard my report concerning Cannock Chace.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Into Worcestershire—King's Norton—The Lickey—The Source of Pebbles—The Incline—Bromsgrove—The Town of Needles—Stoke—Droitwich—Saltworks—The Brine Spring—Salt in olden Time—Tapping the Talc—The Pump-Well—Salt-pan and Panman—The Helpers—Hot Stoves—Sweat-House—Sodden and Sad—A Panman's Week—Competition—Impure and Pure—Dodder Hill—Red Marl and Cheltenham Springs—Westwood—Worcester—The Cathedral—Men and Incidents—The Vinegar Vats.

With early morn we are speeding away to the south-west: the railway sweeps round full half of the town before, having touched an outskirt of clean red houses and pretty gardens, it takes the direct course into Worcestershire. Then at once we are in a pretty country, and the air is cool with dew, and sweet with the fragrance from meadows and hedgerows. We enjoy it even in a third-class carriage, for the Midland Company are not stingy of glass, neither do they put dungeons on wheels and call them carriages: an example which the haughty company whose head-quarters are not twenty miles from St. Pancras' Church, would do well to imitate.

Presently the cheerful village of King's Norton appears on the left, where the "fayre church and a goodly Pyramis of stone over the bell-frames" are still to be seen. A little farther and we see the obelisk and wood on the brow of the Lickey—a favourite resort of

picnic parties from Birmingham, who there enjoy the sight of a broad green vale—of distant hills, among which are some of those which diversified our Shropshire ramble.

This Lickey range attracts geologists as well as picnic parties. It constitutes the watershed, as already explained; it separates the great central table-land from the vale of Severn, terminating in the hills of Clent and Hagley on the north-west. It is moreover the source whence the pebbles met with in far-distant places have been drifted: "which are accumulated," as Dr. Buckland observes, "in immense quantities over the plains of Warwickshire, and the midland counties, and which are found also on the summit of some hills in the neighbourhood of Oxford, and in the valley of the Thames from Oxford downwards to its termination below London."

The Lickey is interesting also to engineers for the incline by which the railway descends to the plain of Worcestershire, with a fall of about three hundred feet in a length of two miles and a quarter. The trains run down merrily from Blackwell to Bromsgrove, but on their return labour up the ascent at the rate of eight or nine miles an hour, aided by an assistant engine.

In the days of stage-coaches, the dwellers south of the Lickey had to cross the hill by the tedious and toilsome windings of the turnpike road, and in early spring were always struck by an immediate change of aspect on the northern side in the backwardness of vegetation as compared with that of the fertile plain they had left. The chilliness of the great table-land is shown by the fact that shrubs which grow around London will not grow around Birmingham.

We get a sight of the noble church of Bromsgrove—a town that lives by worsted and fish-hooks; of charming landscapes about the hill-foot, inclosing a fine old timbered house. Had we time for an hour's walk to the left, we might see Redditch, the town that makes needles for all the world. Many a small square package may you see at times lifted from the branch train at Barnt Green station, each containing ten or twenty thousand of the delicate implements. I hope it was not here that the large store of needles was manufactured which Richard Lander had to trade with, or give away as presents, during his exploration of the Niger, and greatly to his risk and mortification, and the scandal of the British name, for there was not an eye in the whole batch.

On we go between rich harvest-fields and orchards, and ere long the tall chimney at Stoke gives us intimation that we are approaching the most modern of salt-works, and have arrived upon the ground where Nature provides her wholesome brine, and we may be sure that her workshop is situate within the red sandstone. A few miles farther and we are surprised by seeing what looks like an outlier from the Black Country, for there on the left appears sooty and sodden-looking Droitwich—Sodom, as some of the natives call it, because of its saline abundance.

Undeterred by appearances—as is but natural after our experience of the past two weeks—we alight, and walk through the narrow sombre streets to Clay and Newman's works, where our desire to see how salt is made is gratified to our full content. The first thing needful is an abundant supply of brine, and this Droitwich enjoys, for in a part of the Works near the middle of the town, a steam-pump working night and day

brings up water from a well two hundred feet deep. Week after week the drain goes on, exciting us to wonder at the magnitude of the spring, or river, of brine that flows so uninterruptedly underground, and with more impression, for that stream has been flowing from time immemorial. We find mention thereof in the earliest of our history: some authorities derive the name of the county from Wych: in 816 Kenulph king of Mercia gave houses and salt-springs at Wych to the church of Worcester: Edward the Confessor and some of the monarchs who came after him had *droits* upon the Wych, whence the origin of its present name, and 'salterns' were granted to some of the powerful barons of the west; and we may believe that the making of salt was actively carried on, for complaints as to the increasing scarcity of fire-wood, and the destruction of forests, were heard even at the time when the Domesday Book commission were making their inquiry. "I asked a saulter," says Leland, "how many furnaces they had in all the three springes, and he numbered them to an eighteen score, that is three hundred and sixty, saying that every one of them payed yearly to the king 6*s.* 8*d.*"

How to provide salt enough for home consumption? was for centuries a question of chief importance. For a long time Dutch salt, made from sea-water, was considered the best; and a certain John de Sheidame was invited over from Zealand by Henry VI., to come with sixty men to teach the English the improved way of making salt. In later times the wars between England and Holland occasioned great inconvenience by stopping the supplies; the smuggling of salt became a profitable trade, and the necessity for increase of the home manufacture grew more and more pressing. We

find the question one that engaged the attention of the Royal Society from the earliest years of their history; the Fellows were encouraged to visit the Wyches, and suggest improvements, and great diligence was used to gather information and promote inquiry which, regarded from our point of view, seems the more praiseworthy, as at that very time more than one F.R.S. believed

> "That Barnacles turn Soland geese
> In th' Islands of the Orcades."

Even down to the middle of the last century the scarcity and dearness of salt were frequently distressing: all that Lisbon would consent to sell was eagerly bought up by traders from England and the American colonies; and availing themselves of the privilege of making bay-salt in the Cape de Verds, our ships resorted thither in the summer, and the crews were employed on shore during some weeks, or months in bad weather, in collecting the salt from pools on the shore. And after all, if Spain were hostile the vessels were exposed to capture on their way home.

The discovery that pit-coal was as suitable for evaporation as wood, quickened the salt-trade as well as the iron-trade. Droitwich acquired a repute for the excellence of its salt: so good was it that we are told of certain folk in the western shires who spoiled their meat by sprinkling it with as much of native salt as of the weaker foreign salt to which they had been accustomed. The springs from which the brine was pumped were dug through red marl to a depth of thirty or thirty-five feet, till they struck a thick stratum of talc. In 1725, Sir R. Lowe, the member for Worcester, having heard that in Cheshire the

deepest springs yielded the strongest brine, sunk a shaft through the talc, and at one hundred and fifty feet below the surface found a river of brine twenty-two inches deep flowing upon a bed of rock-salt of unknown thickness. The talc, as we read, was no sooner pierced, than "the strong brine broke out with such violence and in such abundance, that two men who were at work in the pit were thrown to the surface and killed."

The present well is a shaft one hundred feet deep, from which a four-inch boring descends another hundred, the whole is carefully lined or 'cased' with iron to prevent the infiltration of fresh water; for the less of water, the less evaporation. The brine contains forty-two per cent. of salt: the pump delivers it into a reservoir whence it flows through undergound pipes to the several premises and to the Works of other makers, who find it more profitable to get their supplies in this way than to pump for themselves. In quantity the brine has the greenish tinge of sea-water, but is remarkably limpid when looked at in a glass.

In another part of the Works we see the process by which brine is made to give up its salt. It is very simple: evaporate the water and the salt remains, and in proportion to the slowness of the evaporation so is the bigness of the deposited crystals. To produce table-salt the water must be boiled, and the quicker the boiling the finer is the grain. The operation is carried on in an iron pan, twenty feet square, and about eighteen inches deep, set upon a brickwork bed, in which the fire-places and flues are constructed. When once the water boils steam flies off rapidly; the supply is kept up from a tap, and after awhile the crystals of salt are seen collecting in heaps and layers

on the bottom of the pan. The pan-man draws these to one side with a large wooden hoe, and presently there is a considerable heap rising above the surface. From this the woman, his assistant, taking her spade, fills one of the square wooden moulds that stand ready, pressing the salt in firmly, so that on lifting off the mould, it retains its shape, which is that of the oblong rectangular loaf familiar to us in warehouses or the shops of retail dealers.

The loaf stands for a few minutes before the mould is removed, the woman meanwhile filling other moulds, whereby a continuous supply of loaves is maintained for the women and maidens who carry them to the 'stove' or drying-room. There they are piled in long wall-like ranges according to size, which comprises one hundred, or eighty, or sixty-four to the ton; and in the vigorous heat of the place speedily lose their moisture and become hard and bright; so hard that they ring when struck. The atmosphere of the stoves is exceedingly dry, and so hot that you half hesitate to enter lest a baking be the consequence. We followed our conductor nevertheless from room to room, and came to one which he told us was used at times as a 'sweat-house' for rheumatic folk, who by sitting an hour or two in that high temperature get rid of their malady through their pores. In this we have a rough and ready illustration of the Roman bath. After a walk through these places we were no longer at a loss to account for the sodden looks of the women, whose daily task is a continual going to and fro between the shed where the pan sends off its clouds of steam and the highly-heated drying-rooms. They wear very thin and scanty clothing—not more indeed than is required for decency, and go through their work with a sad

countenance. There is certainly nothing exhilarating in such circumstances of steam and stove.

The panman's life seems as little to be envied as that of the women. He begins work on Monday morning and does not leave the shed till Saturday night, for no sooner is one boiling over than another begins, and he must be on the spot. His wife or assistant may go home for a few hours after the pan is refilled with brine until the formation of salt commences; but for him there is no such respite, and he can only sleep by snatches. For every ton of table-salt he gets one shilling and eleven pence, out of which he has to pay his helper; for the masters have nothing to do with the hiring of the women; and when he has made his payment there commonly remains one pound a week for himself. So he does not enjoy a compensation in a surprising rate of wages. For herring-salt, which is coarse-grained, he gets but ninepence a ton. We now see somewhat of the reason why Droitwich wears a downcast look; trying work and small wages being unfavourable to cheerfulness.

While Nature gives brine with her present abundance, salt will be as cheap as it happily now is. The competition among the manufacturers of the article is keen: Cheshire will send salt into Worcestershire and undersell Droitwich in its own market; Stoke does the same; for, as in the calico trade, a fraction of a penny tells in the price. And while, in addition to the enormous consumption for domestic uses, thousands of tons are demanded every year by other trades, and the proprietors of alkali works, who in their turn meet eager competitors, the manufacturer of salt will not be able to charge the additional farthing a pound which would make him happy. When salt paid a duty the

market price was £30 a ton. Table-salt is less pure than other kinds because the rapid boiling in which it is produced is unfavourable to the complete separation of the constituent lime. But pure salt can be made from the same brine by slow evaporation. This process is carried on in large pans, ninety feet long and twenty wide, which are kept at so low a temperature, that the water is not agitated, and the steam rising from the surface is scarcely noticeable in summer time. In these the salt crystallises in large lumps, and the hollow pyramidal crystals may be seen floating on the surface, or sinking suddenly to the bottom. The largest lumps after drying, are 'riddled' out and sold as bay-salt, leaving a remainder for agricultural and chemical purposes.

It is a long walk over the whole of the works, but as one pan is the repetition of another, to describe one of a sort is to describe all: As regards the general aspect of the premises, your impression will be that salt-making, like wire-drawing, is an untidy operation. Heaps of 'pickings' lie about—the layer, containing much lime, which solidifies on the bottom of the pans; and large mounds of coarse salt are piled in the open air exposed to rain and changes of weather; and in going from place to place it may be that you will wade through more than one shed knee-deep in salt, and thereby find occasion for a mental congratulation of the English rustic on the advantage he enjoys over the peasants of foreign lands, in the prime quality and abundance of his essential condiment.

From the brow of Dodder Hill, which we crossed on our return to the Station, there is a prospect of the town and neighbourhood. You see the little river Salwarp running through the valley; canal-boats and

railway-trucks laden with salt; the dingy houses where black smoke contrasts with clouds of white steam and the white incrustations about the sheds, and harmonises with the untidy features. The place looks quiet as well as sad, yet it produces one hundred thousand tons of salt a year.

The red marl, which here lies so near the surface that the salt springs have been found troublesome in digging foundations, dips very deeply down below Cheltenham, and is there the source of the celebrated springs. The brine, always flowing in the marl, appears in the wells mineralized and charged with iron by the strata through which it has risen.

There is no lack of cheerfulness in the aspect of the surrounding country, nor of pretty scenes and historical sites. An hour's walk to the north-west would bring us to Westwood, an estate granted to a Sir John Pakington by Henry VIII., and still held by his descendants, who inhabit the mansion that retains the picturesque features designed by the architect of Tudor days. Some of the bishops found a refuge there in troublous times; and there Dean Hickes wrote part of his learned works, and has left us in the preface to his *Grammatica Anglo-Saxonica* an eloquent description of the delightful abode.

We were looking from the station at the purple heights of Malvern when a train came up, and away we sped to Worcester, passing Hindlip on the left, where John Habingdon, Queen Elizabeth's cofferer, built a curious house, which, as was said, contained more uncomfortable hiding-places than comfortable rooms. Presently the route strikes a hill-side which commands a view of the broad vale, and the clean-looking town, and we alight close to the field where

Cromwell won his "crowning mercy," and not far from the road by which Charles started on his flight to Boscobel. The Malverns, rising seven miles distant, terminate the view with a magnificent picture.

The cathedral, which dates from the same time as those of York and Lincoln, is, unlike them, very tame and unpromising on the outside, whereby the interior becomes the more interesting. In our quiet saunter through nave and aisles, Lady-chapel and choir, we see some things that remind us of the scenes and thoughts that have occupied us from time to time during our month's ramble. We see the tomb of Bishop Wulstan who rebuilt the edifice in 1084, of Oswald, of King John, of Prince Arthur who died at Ludlow; and carving in wood and stone of rare excellence. Here, Henry II. laid aside his crown, humiliating himself before the King of Kings; and here the troopers of the Commonwealth made merry over ecclesiastical decorations, and the superstitions of the church.

The view from the tower confirms all your expectations as to the beauty and fertility of Worcestershire. You see a long curving reach of the Severn, with here and there an island in the stream, and on each side of the river broad fields, orchards, pastures, and hop-gardens, stretching away to the eastern and western hills. The townsfolk once took refuge on one of those islands after refusing to pay Danegelt to Hardicanute: the spot where king Edgar's castle stood is discernible: good men, among whom was Stillingfleet, have dwelt in that bishop's palace, leaving a reputation which the church still delights to honour; and while we look round on the scene we recognise it as the birthplace of some of our earliest historians, and are

reminded of that famous inventor the Marquis of Worcester, and of Lord Somers.

A friendly host with whom we dined, recommended us to visit the china-works for which Worcester is celebrated; I, remembering what I had seen at Stoke, asked him for something else, and he suggested—the Vinegar Works. I felt inclined to laugh, but we went nevertheless, and saw the making of vinegar, when the inclination to laugh speedily abated, for the operations are so great as to require the use of thirty-two huge barrel-shaped vats, the hugest of which contain ninety thousand gallons apiece. Some of the Templars' round churches are bandboxes in comparison.

After all, to have seen the making of salt and of vinegar in the same day appears logical when regarded from the sanitary point of view. On some fitting occasion, reader—not now, as we must hasten to the coach-office—I will try to give you a description of the process with the acid.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The Stage-Coach—Coachman's Philosophy—Crookbarrow—The Teme—The Pear-Orchard—About Jemmy Winter—The Link—Aristocratic and Rustic—Malvern, a pleasing Town—Local Phenomena—A hopeful American—The Priory Church—A Ramble on the Hills—The Worcestershire Beacon—The Hills' Coat—The Wych—Black Hill—Malvern Wells—Little Malvern—Wind's Point—The Herefordshire Beacon—Ancient Camp—The Prospect—From the Wrekin to the Mendips—From the Kymin to Clent—First and Last Battle—Final Survey—Blithesome Ditty.

PLEASANT is the drive from Worcester to Malvern, especially on such a cool evening as we had after a scorching day. In such an agreeable temperature the passengers on the coach could not do less than reciprocate, and we talked as if we had been old acquaintance. One of our subjects was the extension of the railway that was soon to deprive visitors of the pleasant stage-coach drive, and stop the Hereford mail which for many years has crossed the hills with its four fast horses. The trains will rush through the hills, and what the passengers gain in time they will more than lose in prospect. Our coachman, however, talked like a philosopher: he had been on the road in some capacity or other ever since his boyhood, some years of the time as a post-boy, and remembered the days when Malvern being considered out of the world, he preferred driving to Kidderminster or Bewdley—

anywhere rather than up "them wild hills." As for the railway, he wasn't going to fret about that: if a man who had been so many years on the road couldn't live without the road, 'twas his own fault; the coach and he had travelled the road together a pretty long time, and all he cared for now was that the old thing shouldn't drop to pieces afore the railway-bridge across the Severn was finished. Having eased his mind on these particulars, he told all he knew concerning the water-cure to an American who sat by his side, looking as worn and prematurely wrinkled as Uncle Sam's subjects commonly do.

Meanwhile we passed St. John's, and saw, away on the left, Whittington Tump, which some call the biggest tumulus in the realm; in its other name, Crookbarrow, lively imaginations find a derivation from Caractacus. Gradually the road rises; hop-gardens appear, then we crossed the Teme near the end of its course, and came to Powick, and then drove between the pippin-orchard and the famous pear-orchard, which when in blossom is perhaps better worth the trouble of a journey to see it than Seville. The trees number about three-score, and are so prolific that in a good year they yield two hundred hogsheads of perry.

There was once a variety of pear named Jemmy Winter, held in esteem in these fruity counties for its peculiar quality. An old writer describes it in a way which may perhaps be interesting to those who manufacture South African sherry in Middlesex. "The Jemmy Winter," says the earnest pyroculturist, "is of no use, except for making cider. If a thief steal it he would incur a speedy vengeance, it being a furious purger; but, being joined with well-chosen crabs, and

reserved to due maturity, it becomes richer than a good French wine; but if drunk before the time it stupefies the roof of the mouth, assaults the brain, and purges more violently than a Galenist. According as it is managed, it proves stronger than Rhenish, Barsac, yea, pleasant Canary, sugared of itself; or as rough as the fiercest Greek wine, holding one, two, three, or more years, so that no mortal can say at what age it proves the best. This we can say, that we have kept it until it burns as quickly as sack, draws the flame like naphtha, and fires the stomach like aqua-vitæ . . . Since I undertook this argument, we have made in one year fifty thousand hogsheads, and this shows the hardiness of the fruit. Let our noble patriots weigh this—the art of raising store of rich wines on our common arable, on our hill and waste grounds; the charge a trifle, the pains small, the profit incredible."

The view of the hills during the last half of the journey is fascinating; more and more their grand features become distinct, until, having arrived at the Link, we begin the ascent. The Link is a growing suburb on the lower slope, and an acceptable place of residence for those who fear the higher range. Here the pace becomes a walk which gives us time to note the pretty houses that look forth from the steep hill-side row above row, and group above group, the detached villas, the pretty gardens and plantations, and all the lively phenomena of the place. The aristocratic air prevails; but with a rustic admixture, for you will hear boys and girls talk of "ripe p'ars," and say, "us is gwine to the *Unicarn* along wi' she." Then as the coach creeps nearer, we see parties of visitors zigzagging down the passes high above the town from their evening stroll, and among them the donkeys

and donkey-boys that save children and damsels the trouble of walking. And amid all the modern circumstance there stands the old and picturesque Priory church, able to rebuke upstarts by excellency of architecture, and a history that dates from hermits' days. Beyond it appear the water-cure establishments concerning which the American is inquisitive and the coachman communicative, and the old fellow with a wave of his whip says he thinks that building won't stop till the houses get to the top of the hill; "and see what houses they are, Sir! a dook needn't be ashamed to live in 'em."

A ramble about Malvern makes you fancy that Nature has heaved up this range of hills on the margin of the great Worcestershire plain for the especial benefit and delectation of invalids. Situate high up on the slope, about three hundred feet above the sea-level, the town enjoys a cool and brisk atmosphere; the streets of houses and shops, which would adorn a metropolis, are not stiff and formal, but are prettily varied by different styles of building, and by shrubberies and trees. You may lounge amid fashionable company, listening to the band, and at the same time entertain your eye with the view across the vale of Severn, and if you wish for an uninterrupted prospect, a few minutes' walk to the right or left, or upwards, will satisfy your desire. It is a shame to be ill where day after day your visible horizon can be widened at pleasure, and where you may saunter forth in quietness, and, sitting on a grassy bank, watch the moods of twilight, and the advance of night across the broad landscape, and see how like stars of hope, the scattered lights gleam the brighter as the darkness prevails, as we did.

We were out early on the morrow to see Malvern get up. It does not open its eyes and take down shutters in the rustic manner, which implies indifference, but with the prompt method of Piccadilly. Yet how different! Here all is fresh, clean, and cool, leaves are heard to rustle, there is a scent of dew in the air, and glimpses of distant landscapes appear to the roving eye, while the prentice lads and shopmen call to one another across the street in familiar tones. Here and there may be seen an adventurous visitor starting in easy dress for a before-breakfast constitutional; or a husband supporting his young pale wife to a warm sheltered corner, or a couple of young ladies in their worst round hats and limp cotton gowns, as with alpenstock in hand they take the path leading up to St. Ann's Well. But the early birds are very few. We met the American, who greeted us with a cheery tone which he lacked the day before. "I feel better already," he said, "my oppression is gone: the air is so light and so pure that I really think I shall get well without the water-cure." While congratulating, I took leave to recommend him to walk about, think of nothing, and have faith in Nature. It was but natural that a man should feel better at Malvern who had been vainly seeking health for six weeks in that depressing and over-rated place the Isle of Wight.

Besides its attractions of air and scenery, Malvern offers that of antiquity in the venerable Priory church, an edifice which may be described as a small cathedral, where you may pass an hour in patient admiration of thick round columns and Norman arches, against which the Pointed work of the choir looks the more graceful, of flowing tracery and glorious windows, of chapels, tombs, and many a relic of the ancient days. To the

sojourner who can alternate his hill-walks, or his strolls in the Promenade Gardens with meditation under a roof, the ancient church presents a suggestive resource.

It was still early when we started for a day's ramble on the hills. We took a passing drink from St. Ann's Well, and scrambled up the slopes the shortest way to the top of the Worcestershire Beacon, impatient to behold the view which had delighted us on former occasions. From this summit, more than fourteen hundred feet in height, you can see the whole range, a length of nine miles, with an average thickness of two miles at the base. To one coming from the north, the Abberley Hills seem but a preparation for the imposing elevation of the Malverns, and if you want a few hours of good exercise, scale End Hill, cross North Hill to the Beacon, and walk to Key's End at the southern extremity. This was our plan; but we had to content ourselves with a shorter distance, so turning our backs on the Beacon we rambled along the lofty brow.

Though the hills are built up of different kinds of rock, but very few appear to break the compact coat of turf which everywhere enwraps the hills, sprinkled in places with gorse, or patched with fern, which gives shelter to foxgloves and harebells, a thousand feet above the plain.

What a pleasure it was to walk upon that dry elastic turf, met by an invigorating breeze, where by a turn of the head we could look east or west across a seemingly boundless landscape. Who shall tire of Malvern while that landscape exists, putting on a lovely garment of pink and white, when the cuckoo comes to chant his name in pear-orchards and apple-orchards for miles around, or when Summer displays his pride in the

woods and fields, or when autumn stealing colour from the sunsets pours it out upon the leaves ?

We descended into the Wych or gap where the road from Worcester to Hereford crosses in a rocky cutting, and climbed the steep shoulders of Black Hill and looked down on Malvern Wells, a place of baths and hydropathy, with a Holy Well, which, in common with other springs among the hills, was once resorted to for its medicinal virtues. But according to Mr. Leonard Horner, although the water contains a small quantity of lime, magnesia, and iron, it has "no other gaseous contents than atmospheric air." And the same may be said of St. Ann's Well.

Presently we saw Little Malvern, a quiet village lying with its picturesque old church in a valley formed by the deviation of the Herefordshire Beacon to the west of the range. Then we descended into another gap—Wind's Point, where the *British Camp Inn* stands by the road-side; a house well-known for good cider and as a resort for pic-nic parties.

The Herefordshire Beacon is 1370 feet high : on we went, up the winding trackway, and came at length to the camp on the top. Forty-four acres are here inclosed and protected by steep banks and deep ditches, the remains of a camp which, as antiquaries conclude, was already of a good old age when the Romans began their conquest of this side of the island. We rendered due homage to the works of ancient Britons by sliding into the ditches and pacing the banks, and then sat down to feast our eyes with the prospect.

The eastern side of the hills is for the most part steep and abrupt, with hollows worn here and there into deep gullies, but the western side has a gradual though irregular slope which sinks down to meet the undulating

lowlands of Herefordshire, but, as it were, only to rise again, swell beyond swell, ridge beyond ridge, height beyond height, until the broad green landscape melts into the blue of far-distant hills in Wales. In this variety of surface the border county possesses a charm and a beauty which are not found in the generally level view across Worcestershire. And the whole scene is wooded: every slope and every ridge is dark with trees, or with thick plantations delightful to the eye, notwithstanding that they are cut down to make hoops for cider-barrels. Not a foot of waste ground is to be seen; but the whole region rejoices in woods and orchards, pastures and fields. Here the eye wearies not of seeing, nor the mind of the refreshing thought inspired by so rich a scene, nor the heart of the emotion awakened by so vast an horizon.

Eminent objects arrest the gaze; let us pass them in review. Far, far away to the north-west appears the Wrekin, fronted by the Clees; then, following round the rim of blue, we see Radnor Forest, Robin Hood's Butts, and, if our sight be good, the red square tower of Hereford cathedral, standing on a site devoted to the church for more than twelve hundred years; then the Black Mountains, the Sugar Loaf which looks down on Abergavenny, and Skyridd Vawr, with the spire of Ledbury Church in the foreground; then Kymin who bathes his feet in the Wye, and surveys the pleasant vale of Monmouth; then May Hill, "with his tufted head," as Bloomfield sings, and in the near view Eastnor castle, and the obelisk that commemorates the name of Somers.

We have surveyed half the circle and are now looking southwards. Next beyond us appears Swinyard Hill, then Midsummer Hill, on which is also a camp,

then Ragstone, and last Key's End which terminates the Malvern range. Then looking far beyond we see a pale-brown gleam—the estuary of the Severn; near it the Mendip hills are faintly seen, then the Cotswolds, with Gloucester at their base, indicated by its cathedral tower; then a thin smoke shows where Cheltenham lies near the foot of Cleeve, and so round to Tewkesbury and Bredon hill, and the Vale of Evesham, and across the fertile champaign to Worcester.

We have looked into "twelve fair counties," where three cathedral towers are within sight, where Avon bearing tribute from its fountain-head by Naseby, falls into Severn; where remote Edgehill reminds us of the first, and the height behind Worcester of the last battle between the people's right and Kingcraft; where the distant prospect of Clent, and Hagley, and the Lickey suggests a contrast with the smoky haunts of labour that lie beyond, and our own wide range of freedom and enjoyment.

We descended by the shortest way to Wind's Point, sliding down the smoothest slopes; we retraced our course along the crest of Black Hill, and recrossed the Wych, and mounted once more to the summit of Worcestershire Beacon, and there sat down for awhile reluctant to give up our airy seat. Being nearest to the town it is the summit most resorted to, and access is made comparatively easy by well-kept paths, along which a wheeled chair may be pushed or a donkey driven to the very top; and on a fine day you will see many a group contemplating the beauty of their native land. And if you love to meditate and feel the glory and majesty of night, seek the hill-top alone, or with one true companion when the stars are shining overhead and the moon's thin crescent is sinking low.

The hours fled: morn waxed to noon, on rolled the great bright sun, and the day was waning ere we left our airy seat upon the hill. Then we made a quick descent to the town where the coach was preparing to start, and now, while the Malverns are receding in the distance, and we are returning to Birmingham by the way that we came, let us entertain ourselves with a ditty, which being about three hundred years old, has thereby a claim to notice.

"As I did walk alone
Late in an evening;
I heard the voice of one
Most sweetly singing;
Which did delight me much,
Because the song was such,
And ended with a touch,
O praise the Lord.

"Great Malverne on a rock
Thou standest surely;
Doe not thyself forget,
Living securely;
Thou hast of blessings store,
No country town hath more,
Do not forget therefore
To praise the Lord.

"Thou hast a famous church
And rarely builded:
No country town hath such
Most men have yielded,
For pillars stout and strong,
And windows large and long:
Remember in thy song
To praise the Lord.

"That thy prospect is good,
None can deny thee;
Thou hast great store of wood
Growing hard by thee;
Which is a blessing great
To roast and boil thy meat,
And thee in cold to heat;
O praise the Lord.

"Turn up thine eyes on highe,
There fairly standing
See Malverne's highest hill,
All hills commanding;
They all confess at will
Their sovereign Malvern Hill,
Let it be mighty still:
O praise the Lord.

"Out of that famous hill
There daily springeth
A water, passing still
Which always bringeth
Great comfort to all them
That are diseased men,
And makes them well again
To praise the Lord.

'A thousand bottles there
Were filled weekly,
And many costrils rare
For stomachs sickly;
Some of them into Kent,
Some were to London sent,
Others to Berwick went,
O praise the Lord."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AN INTERCEPTION, AND A RETURN, AND CONCLUSION.

INTERCEPTED on the way up by mine ancient friend, I had to tarry some hours in the city where Peeping Tom still looks down in effigy from the corner of a street; where the tall spires that the Poet watched to such good purpose while he "hung with grooms and porters on the bridge," shoot aloft from grand old churches that still preserve in stone the beautiful thoughts of past generations; where fragments of the ancient wall, and the ancient gate, and narrow, crooked streets, remind us still of the days of Godiva and Queen Elizabeth; where St. Mary's venerable hall brings down to us the dignity and circumstance with which councilmen loved to environ themselves in the olden time, and shows to the reader of *Adam Bede* the solemn chamber in which unhappy Hetty Sorrel stood at the bar of justice; where much that is picturesque remains with more that is undesirable; where watch-makers and ribbon-weavers constitute 'the people;' and where Common-sense and Intelligence, unfaithful to their trust, have, on more than one occasion, allowed the mob to decide a public question, and decide it wrong.

Ancient friends are apt to be wilful: mine kept me

till the first of August was two hours old; so that while the train was bearing me homewards, my thought fell into that dreamy state which is often more active if less logical than wakefulness. Pleasant visions of hills and woods and sunshiny landscapes came and went, intermingled with glimpses of the days of old, and of personages who had figured therein, of monks in chapel and in field, of the "wife to that grim Earl," through whom we learn that "not only we, the latest seed of Time, new men, that in the flying of a wheel cry down the past; not only we, that prate of rights and wrongs, have loved the people well, and loathed to see them overtaxed." Then there passed before me the scenes of work and labour, with their earnest endeavour and furious appliances, and somewhat of the emotion I had felt while witnessing them, again came over me.

Glorious would be the task of him whose insight penetrating beyond the naked facts should search out their significance; who beholding the artisan at the roaring, scorching furnace, in the gloomy workshop or noisy factory—the weaver at his loom, and the sun-burnt husbandman furrowing the glebe, should be able to show the one great purpose, and solve the life-problem therein comprehended. More than glorious, it would be a sublime task to discover in that rude conflict the hidden harmony, and make manifest, how mortal turmoil is but part of an immortal plan. Let us hope that the task will be one day achieved; meanwhile we can but look on in faith, believing that all is

"Toil co-operant to an end."

Anon, rosy-fingered Dawn peeped in at the window, and birds began to twitter under the fresh, cool leaves,

and when I walked home from Euston Square for a short sleep before going back to work, the red sunbeams were streaming across the housetops of imperial London.

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BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 10 March, 2016